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ABSTRACT

As a step in ensuring positive and constructive links between business and education through research, this study was conducted to assess employer views of student assessment and credentialing processes in the Northern Territory (Australia), replicating a study conducted in New South Wales (Australia). A questionnaire was completed by 206 employers (out of 500 employers contacted by mail) to determine their views, and structured group discussions were held in workshop sessions attended by about 40 participants (employers, representatives of the Rotary Club, and school system employees). A high percentage of employers placed particular emphasis on presentation of self, oral communication, and standard of dress as important attributes for school leavers (graduates). Presentation and organization of supporting documents were seen as almost as important. Most employers did take into consideration the subjects the school leaver applicant had studied, and nearly all placed high importance on English and mathematics. A majority placed high importance on computer studies, commerce, and economics; and about two-thirds placed high importance on the sciences and technical studies. Findings should enable the Northern Territory schools to make better decisions about students' needs and reporting practices to reflect assessment for employers. Appendixes contain: (1) the questionnaire used; (2) responses to questionnaire items; (3) the workshop agenda; (4) focus questions for the workshop groups; and (5) a list of participants. There are 17 tables of study data and 12 illustrative figures. (SLD)

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Research and Evaluation
Report Number 2/1989

EMPLOYER EXPECTATIONS OF SCHOOL LEAVER APPLICANTS

A joint research project conducted by the Northern Territory Department of Education, the Education Advisory Council with assistance from the Rotary clubs of Darwin and Alice Springs.

Northern Territory Department of Education
Darwin 1990

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FOREWORD

This report is a valuable document which has already influenced attitudes and practice both within education and business because so many were involved in its production.

We were fortunate in being able to replicate the NSW study 'Documents for School Leavers: What Employers Want' (1987), and very few differences were found in the findings of the two studies. The comparison between the views of NSW and NT employers gives the reader a bigger picture as well as a local perspective.

This study has revealed that the employers surveyed placed considerable importance on the physical and oral presentation of school leaver job applicants. They were not particularly interested in schools attended but they did attach great importance to the student's performance in English and Mathematics.

At the Employers' Workshop held in May last year, participants engaged in discussion and produced a wide range of recommendations for the serious consideration of the Department, schools, school leavers and employers themselves.

This study has also shown that members of the community, particularly members of Rotary clubs, have been able to work with the educationists to produce a valuable piece of research which strengthened communication between schools and the business community. This process itself has been of great benefit to all parties: participating employers learned more about the current and changing education system in the Northern Territory and educators, administrators and school leavers learned more about the needs of employers.

I commend this report to you. It makes worthwhile reading. I hope its production will continue to stimulate improvements in the relationship betwean business and schools in the interests of our young people.

Dr Harry Payne
Chairman
NT Board of Studies

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- Vocational Service Directors and members of the Darwin and Alice Springs Rotary clubs, particularly Mr Barry Davis, Rotary Club of Port Darwin
- Employers who completed the questionnaire
- Employers' workshop participants
- Employers' workshop contributors:

Chairman:	Mr Merv Elliott
Discussion Group Chairpersons:	Mr Brian Brock Mr Tim Freed Mr Ray Hutt Mr Prath Prathapan
Discussion Group Resource Persons:	Ms Heather Blakeley Mr Bob Cox Mr Robert Dunbar Ms Susan Luong-Van Mr Chris Sharpe Dr Richard Watkins
Speakers:	Mr Geoff Cross Mr Raphael Crowe Mr Tom Harris Dr Harry Payne Mr Huang Zheng Sen Mr Robert Dunbar
Workshop Co-ordinators:	Mr Cliff Fowler Ms Susan Luong Van Mr Chris Sharpe Mr Huang Zheng Sen

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INTRODUCTION

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1.1 BACKGROUND

The Northern Territory Government's discussion paper, 'Towards the 90s - Volume 1 (1987)', sought to establish the basis of future educational policy frameworks into the 1990s. 'Towards the 90s - Volume 2 (1988)', is a further edition based on wider consultation throughout the community including employer representatives. A section of this document is central to the development of this research project. This section states (p. 9):

> *'Closer links between schools and industry are proposed to increase the confidence of business in our education system'.* ... [the views of employers regarding] ... *'the most sought after attributes in school leavers'* [will be surveyed].'

It is also stated that some steps have already been taken to enhance industry-school links.

> *'Meanwhile success has been achieved through:*
>
> - *student work experience;*
> - *industry representation on subject area committees and other advisory bodies;*
> - *school excursions to places of industry;*
> - *industry representatives working as school resource personnel;*
> - *industry sponsorship of Territory-wide programs and specific projects, e.g. the CSIRO Science Centre and schools' legal education group;*
> - *career days; and*
> - *consultation through the Business Education Council (est 1987).'*

In response to reaction to these documents, the Education Advisory Council (EAC) established a School/Industry Links Task Force to address issues associated with the relationship between schools and industry.

This Task Force, the Business Education Council and Departmental officers decided to replicate the New South Wales Department of Education and New South Wales Employers' Education Consortium, (1987) study, 'Documents for School Leavers: What Employers Want'. Hereafter this study will be referred to as the 'NSW study'.

On a national level, the need to ensure that educationists bear in mind the relationship between the changing needs of all levels of the economy, the workplace and education has been apparent.

Beare and Millikan's (1988, p. 8) project report for the Commission for the Future discusses the school-industry relationship and offers some advice.

'Implications for the school/business interface

- *School programs which incorporate better relations with business are needed, and which provide more adequately for education about work, for careers education, and which will give some work experience to all students.*
- *Some schemes are needed which build a better interaction between the business community and teachers.*
- *Means must be found to allow business to make positive contributions to schools; some existing schemes include 'adopt a school', 'adopt a business', optional part-time school and part-time work, and school-based enterprises.'*

This study represents a further step in ensuring positive and constructive links between business and education through research aimed at providing a foundation for further information exchanges.

The comparisons drawn between this study and the NSW one may be informative on a national scale. Because the instruments used were almost identical in nature, where findings suggest common views, there exists a firmer basis from which to generalise. In other words, where employers in both the NT and NSW are saying virtually the same thing in response to a particular question, it is more convincing than if it had been discovered in only one study in isolation.

It may also be instructive for researchers in other parts of Australia wishing to conduct similar research because they will have the opportunity to compare the slightly different approaches used.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to survey employer views of student assessment and credentialling practices. In a media release from the NT Department of Education on Monday 17 October 1988, the objectives for the study in the Territory were stated as:

- *'To provide students and career advisers with a better understanding of employers' requirements of school leavers.*
- *To further the development of a certification and reporting process which is both understood and accepted by employers and the community.*
- *To assist all concerned in deciding what documents should be included in the student portfolio which in future will be provided for all students in Year 10 and above.'*

1.3 PROCEDURE

The NT Study followed the NSW model and consisted of two phases:

1 a questionnaire administered to a large number of employers to gain factual, quantitative information, and
2 structured group discussions conducted during a workshop with a smaller number of employers, in order to supplement the quantitative data with more comprehensive, considered information.

1.3.1 Employer Sample

For statistical purposes, it was decided that 500 employers would comprise the questionnaire sample.

Since it proved impossible to obtain a current and accurate register of all employers, decisions needed to be made about the most reasonable and feasible method of selecting subjects from the population of employers.

It seemed that of the possible strategies to tackle this problem, the most appropriate was a stratified sampling technique which would allocate questionnaires to types of industry on the basis of employment size. It was argued that types of industries employing more people would, more often, employ relatively more school leavers. Therefore more questionnaires were allocated to these types of industries. However, this did not preclude the selection of employers from small businesses as subjects.

Apart from designating numbers of questionnaires to be completed within particular types of industry and outlining the following guide to employer selection, the research

team played only a minor role in identifying persons to whom the questionnaires should be sent. Representatives of the six Darwin Rotary clubs and the Rotary Club of Alice Springs were requested to assist. With the business expertise within these clubs, the prospect of surveying the most 'suitable' employers was enhanced, but they were offered some guidance.

The guide given to Rotarians selecting lists of employers within a type of industry to survey was:

- allocate the number of subjects for each type of industry
- ensure large and small business employers are represented
- consider employers in locations outside of Darwin
- give preference to employers amenable to the task of completing the questionnaire

Lists of subjects were finalised, questionnaires were sent out and Rotary clubs undertook to make personal contact with, and offer assistance to, the respondents.

1.3.2 Questionnaire

This study employed the instruments used in the NSW study almost without change. The questionnaire was virtually identical (see Appendix 1) and the employers' workshop (see Appendix 3) was also very similarly structured. This was done to facilitate comparisons.

Two minor changes were made to the questionnaire: 'Computer education' and 'Social and Cultural Education' were added to the list of subjects in Part 2.

1.3.3 Data Analysis and Reporting

Data were processed using a Macintosh computer program Statview 512+ ®.

Many of the items on the questionnaire asked respondents to rate on a four point scale of 'importance' or 'usefulness'. In all cases '1', was the highest rated i.e. 'most important' or 'most useful', and '4' was 'not important' or 'not useful'.

In the NSW study, the values for ratings of '1' and '2', and '3' and '4' were combined and are presented to clearly show a distinction between 'for' and 'against' viewpoints. This helps to give the information greater visual impact. From the reactions of many Rotarians and other business representatives involved in education advisory committees, the NSW report was particularly well presented and gave a clear picture.

Of necessity, this involved some collapsing of the data but readers are able to consult the 'data-in-full' in the appendixes. In this report the graphs represent the combined percentages for '1' and '2', however the tables provide, in addition, the individual values for '1' and '2'. Instead of including the values for '3' and '4', a mean rating score has been included which, essentially, reflects the average of respondent views regarding a particular item.

It should be noted that the lower the mean rating score, the higher the importance that is attached to a particular item. Conversely, the higher the mean rating score, the lower the importance that is attached to a particular item.

It is also important to note that some columns of percentage data do not total 100 per cent due to rounding.

Information gained from the employers' workshop is included as a separate chapter and thus kept distinct from the questionnaire findings.

1.4 HOW EMPLOYERS RESPONDED TO THE STUDY

Five hundred questionnaires were sent to the organisations identified using the strategy stated previously. Two hundred and six completed questionnaires were returned. An additional 50 were returned uncompleted. On some it was claimed that the employer did not feel qualified to reply. Others were returned because the business had ceased to trade or shifted to a new address.

Employers responding provided adequate representation of the industry classifications the study intended to survey (see Table 1.1).

1.4.1 By ASIC Division

Table 1.1 illustrates the response rate by Australian Standard Industrial Classification (ASIC) divisions.

Figures bracketed represent the NSW study's percentage return by ASIC divisions. The marked variations in numbers of respondents from each division in the two studies are due to a number of factors including the different sampling procedures adopted and differences in the industrial and commercial structures of the NT compared with NSW.

One notable difference, is the number of respondents sampled from ASIC divisions 'J' (Public Administration and Defence) and 'K' (Community Services). These two divisions in the Northern Territory include industries which collectively have the largest employ-

ment sizes. In this study, 16% of the respondents were from 'J' and 24% from 'K'. By comparison, the percentage of respondents from these two divisions sampled in the NSW study was quite low (5 and 2% respectively).

However, due to the sampling procedure used in this study, it did not follow that public sector employers were surveyed in greater proportions than private ones. In fact it was the opposite. Sixty eight per cent of the respondents were private sector employers and 32% were public sector employers.

TABLE 1.1

Return of Questionnaires by ASIC Division

DIV	ASIC - TYPE OF INDUSTRY	Per cent of resp. by Div.	Quest's sent	Quest's ret'd	Per cent ret'd
A	AGRICULTURE, FISHING, FOR ...	2 (2)	16	4	25
B	MINING	4 (1)	25	8	32
C	MANUFACTURING	5 (39)	21	11	52
D	ELECTRICITY GAS AND WATER	0 (1)	5	1	20
E	CONSTRUCTION	11 (3)	41	23	56
F	WHOLESALE/RETAIL TRADE	17 (9)	71	36	51
G	TRANSPORT AND STORAGE	3 (4)	27	6	22
H	COMMUNICATION	4 (2)	13	8	62
I	FINANCE, BUSINESS AND PROP...	8 (30)	39	16	41
J	PUBLIC ADMIN. AND DEFENCE	20 (5)	80	41	51
K	COMMUNITY SERVICES	14 (2)	121	29	24
L	RECREATIONAL, PERSONAL	11 (2)	41	23	56
			500	206	

Figures in brackets are NSW results.

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1.4.2 Employment Size of Responding Organisation

Employers were asked to state the number of employees of the organisation they were representing. One hundred and eighty-eight employers supplied this information.

TABLE 1.2

Respondents According to the Employment Size of the Organisation they Represented

EMPLOYMENT SIZE	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1-10	65	35
11-20	33	18
21-30	25	13
31-50	19	10
51-100	24	13
101-500	15	8
501-850	4	2
851-1200	2	1
1200 plus	1	1

Three organisations reported no employees. Fifteen organisations provided no information for this item. Collectively the NT respondents represented organisations employing 15 819 employees and NSW respondents represented organisations employing 333 162 employees.

In the NSW study approximately half of the respondents reported that their organisations employed more than 500 employees. In this study only seven respondents reported employment sizes greater than five hundred employees. In other words this study, in general, surveyed much smaller organisations than did the NSW study, but Table 1.2 demonstrates that the employers responding collectively represented a broad range of employment sizes.

1.4.3 Employers of Years 10-12 School Leavers

Employers were asked to state separately the numbers of Years 10, 11 and 12 school leavers their organisation employed in a 'typical' year. This was not asked of the NSW study respondents.

TABLE 1.3

Numbers of Years 10, 11 and 12 Students Employed in a Typical Year

NO. OF SCHOOL LEAVERS EMPLOYED	NO. OF RESPONDENTS EMPLOYING SCHOOL LEAVERS FROM EACH YEAR LEVEL.		
	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
0	107	96	89
1 - 5	32	39	55
6 - 10	2	7	7
11 - 30	1	3	3

	Level	Number
School Leavers Employed	Year 10	91
	Year 11	185
	Year 12	246

The number of Years 10-12 school leavers employed by respondents in a typical year was 522. This represents approximately 3% of the total employment workforce of organisations responding to this survey. In the NSW study, this proportion was slightly greater (5.06%).

1.4.4 Positions Held by Respondents

Employers were asked to indicate the position they held within their organisation.

Table 1.4 shows the categories of positions into which respondents were placed.

TABLE 1.4
Position Held by Respondent

POSITION	Numbers NT(NSW)	Percentage NT(NSW)
Director/general manager	99*(14)*	48*(6)*
Plant/office/branch manager	15*(5)*	7*(2)*
Executive officer	26*(8)*	3*(4)*
Personnel officer	11*(68)*	5*(30)*
Personnel manager	11*(112)*	5*(50)*
Group division manager	16*(7)*	8*(3)*
Work supervisor	8*(1)*	4*(0)*
Accountants	4	2
Apprentice training officer	2*(2)*	1*(1)*
Training foreman	0*(1)*	0*(0)*
Industrial relations executive	1*(3)*	0*(1)*
Industrial relations officer	0*(3)*	0*(1)*
Clerk	6*(1)*	3*(0)*
Other	5	2

There appears to be a marked difference between the two studies in terms of the positions held by respondents. The NT study has incorporated the responses of comparatively more 'managers' and the NSW study comparatively more 'personnel managers'. However, little can be safely concluded from these details as there is no apparent universal understanding of the titles and duties of various 'positions' across, or even within, industries. It may well, however, relate to the much higher proportion of small organisations in the NT survey as they may not have personnel managers.

1.5 THE WORKSHOP

1.5.1 Organisation andProgram

The one-day workshop was held on 8 May 1989, using the conference facilities at the Beaufort Hotel, Darwin.

The workshop consisted of:

- presentation of the findings from the survey (copies of the draft report had previously been supplied to participants)
- an information session in which speakers outlined current direction being pursued by the Board of Studies and the Business Education Council

- two discussion sessions when groups considered specific issues explored through the survey and framed appropriate responses and recommendations

- a plenary session when groups reported back to the full workshop and recommendations were refined and collectively endorsed.

A copy of the workshop agenda appears in Appendix 3. The probe questions used by the discussion groups are shown in Appendix 4.

1.5.2 The Participants

Decisions concerning participation in the workshop were influenced by the need to provide for appropriate representation of the various interest groups involved in the study. Invitations were therefore sent to selected members of the following groups:

(a) employers from each business classification involved in the survey
(b) employer organisations
(c) the Business Education Council
(d) Rotary groups that assisted with the survey.

From these groups, a total of 24 employer representatives actually attended on the day.

Because of the level of interest in the survey, representatives with observer status were invited from the following organisations:

Council of Government Schools Organisations
Northern Territory Principals Association
Trades and Labour Council
Northern Territory Teachers Federation

In addition, certain officers of the Department of Education also attended in a support role, as facilitators and recorders.

A full list of all participants is provided in Appendix 5.

FINDINGS

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2.1 THE USEFULNESS OF VARIOUS DOCUMENTS IN A SCHOOL LEAVER APPLICATION

Questionnaire items 6-14

In regard to selecting employees, employers were asked the following question:

> *'When school leavers apply for employment they may provide a range of documents to support their application. How useful are these documents for selection purposes?'*

Examples of documents (see Table 2.1) were cited and employers were asked to rate each document on a 1 ('very useful') to 4 ('not useful') scale. Table 2.1 shows the percentage of employers rating documents '1' and '2'. Also, the percentages for '1' and '2' combined and the mean for all of the ratings for each item are shown. Figure 2.1 shows percentages of employers rating items '1' and '2' combined for both NT and NSW.

TABLE 2.1

The Usefulness of Various Supporting Documents for Selection Purposes, as Perceived by Employers. Items 6-13.

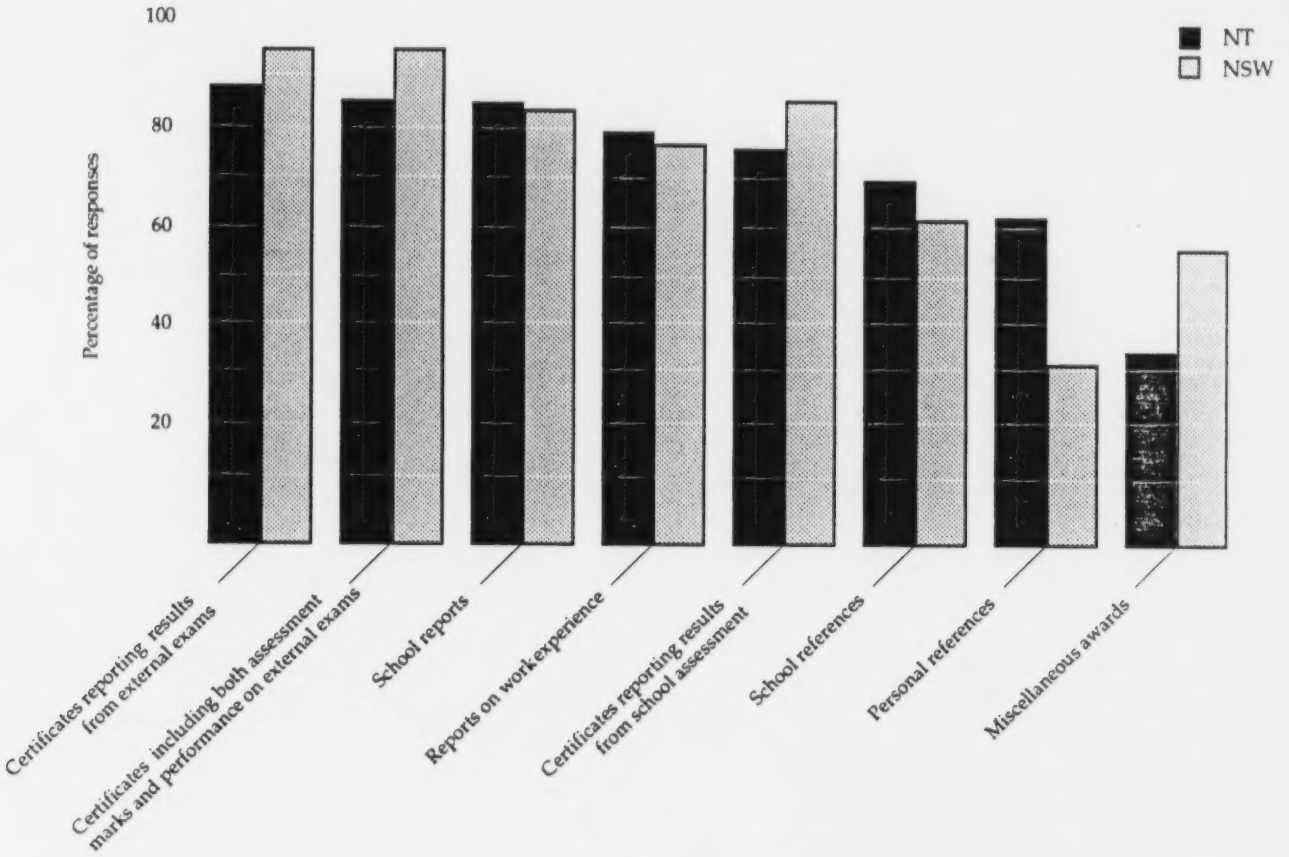
Percentage of employers rating items

DOCUMENT	1	2	1 and 2	MEAN for 1-4
6. Reports on work experience	39 (35)	40 (41)	79 (76)	1.9
7. School references	30 (16)	39 (45)	69 (61)	2.1
8. School reports	43 (46)	41 (37)	84 (83)	1.8
9. Personal references	26 (7)	35 (24)	61 (31)	2.2
10. Certificates reporting results from external examinations	45 (62)	42 (32)	88 (95)	1.7
11. Certificates reporting results from school assessments	28 (41)	47 (43)	75 (85)	2
12. Certificates including both assessment marks and performance on external examinations	45 (61)	39 (34)	84 (95)	1.7
13. Miscellaneous awards (eg. swimming, debating, first aid)	9 (13)	24 (42)	33 (55)	2.7

Figures in brackets are NSW results.

FIGURE 1

NT and NSW employers rating the usefulness of various supporting documents '1' or '2', for selection purposes.



For these eight items an average of 192 employers responded.

Using the mean of the ratings, items 6-13 can be placed in rank order. It is impossible to separate the two highest ranked documents: certificates reporting results from external examinations; and certificates including both assessment marks and performance on external examinations for selection purposes. The next highest ranked documents were school reports followed by reports on work experience. With the exception of miscellaneous awards, all other documents were considered by a majority of employer respondents to be useful (ratings of '1' or '2').

Whilst a comparison of the two studies for these items reveals similar employer views, support for documents, 'personal references' and 'miscellaneous awards', was markedly different. NT respondents were much more in favour of 'personal references' and much less supportive of 'miscellaneous awards', than were their NSW counterparts.

2.2 IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL LEAVER ATTRIBUTES FOR SELECTION PURPOSES

Questionnaire items 15-20

With regard to selecting employees, employers were asked the following question:

> *'What importance do you place on the following attributes, in selecting school leavers for employment?'*

Examples of attributes were cited and respondents were asked to rate each one on a 1 ('very important') to 4 ('not important') scale. Results appear in Table 2.2 and Figure 2.

TABLE 2.2

Importance Employers Placed on Various School Leaver Personal Attributes. Questionnaire items 15 - 19.

Percentage of employers rating items

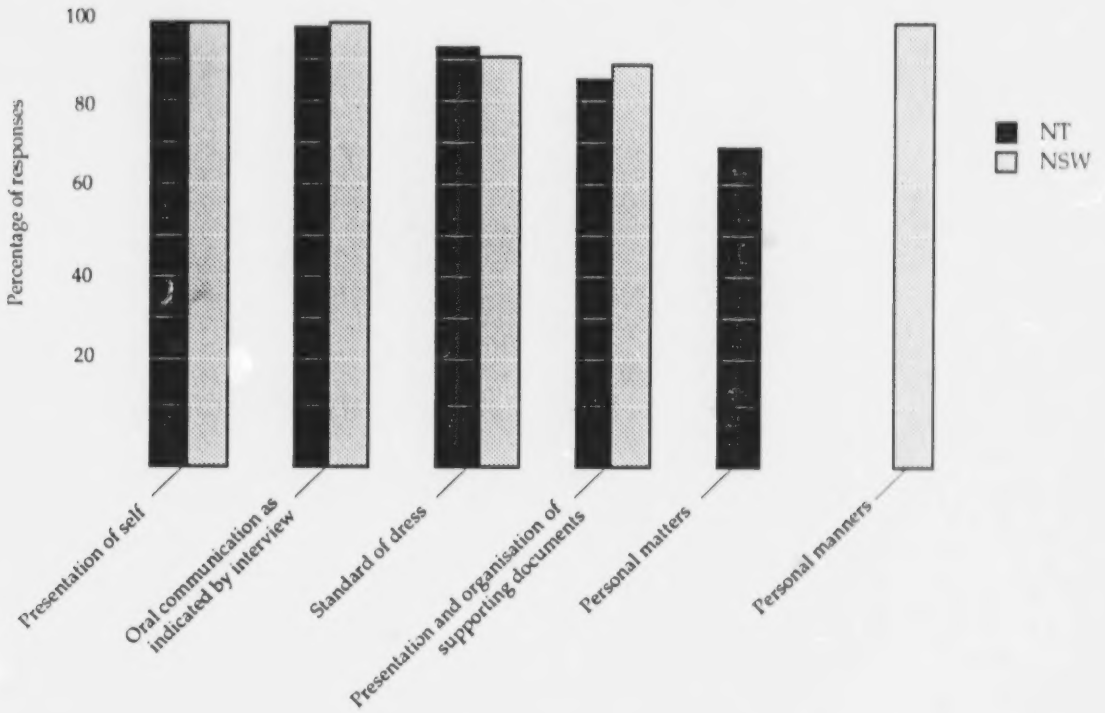
Personal Attribute	1	2	1 and 2	MEAN for 1-4
15. Oral communication as indicated by interview	76(71)	22(28)	98(99)	1.3
16. *Personal matters	22	47	69	2.1
16. Personal manners	(56)	(43)	(99)	
17. Standard of dress	50(41)	43(50)	93(90)	1.6
18. Presentation of self	81(69)	18(30)	99(99)	1.2
19. Presentation and organisation of supporting documents	35(41)	51(48)	86(89)	1.8

Note: NSW figures are in brackets.

* *Due to a printing error item 16 in the NT questionnaire read 'matters' instead of 'manners'.*

FIGURE 2

Percentage of Employers Rating Highly Various School Leaver Attributes for Selection Purposes.



It is evident that particular personal attributes of school leaver applicants are seen by employer respondents in both NT and NSW as being particularly important. Using the mean for the ratings of each of these items, 'Presentation of self' and 'Oral communication as indicated by interview', were the highest ranked by NT employers. This was followed by 'Standard of dress'.

With the notable exception of item 16, the NT and NSW studies produced very similar findings. Due to a printing error, the NT questionnaire read 'Personal matters' rather than 'Personal manners'. The former is probably less definitive and consequently may have had some effect on the NT finding.

Open-ended data (item 20)

Employers were also invited to make further suggestions of personal attributes they saw to be worthy of consideration during the selection of employees. Forty-three employers responded and 63 individual comments were recorded. The most popular suggestion (11 comments) was that employers wanted to see that the applicant had thoroughly re-

searched the requirements of the job. Eight comments referred to 'attitude', 8 to'self confidence', and 6 to 'personality'. Full details are included in Appendix 2.

2.3 IMPORTANCE PLACED ON SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS IN THE SELECTION PROCESS

Questionnaire items 21-27

Employers were asked the following question:

> *'In selecting school leavers for employment do you take the school they attended into consideration?'.*

One hundred and ninety-six employers responded and only 22 % indicated that they did take the school attended by the applicant into consideration. The NSW study reported almost the same response (23 %).

If employers responded with a 'yes', they were asked to rate school-related characteristics (see Table 2.3) on a 1 ('very important') to 4 ('not important') scale in regard to selection practices. Table 2.3 shows the percentage of employers rating items '1' and '2'. A combined percentage for '1' and '2' ratings and a mean score for the ratings for each item are shown. Figure 3 shows the NT and NSW percentages for '1' and '2' ratings by respondents to items 21 -26.

TABLE 2.3

Value Employers Placed on Various School-Related Characteristics When the Applicant's Previously Attended School is Taken into Account. Items 21 -26.

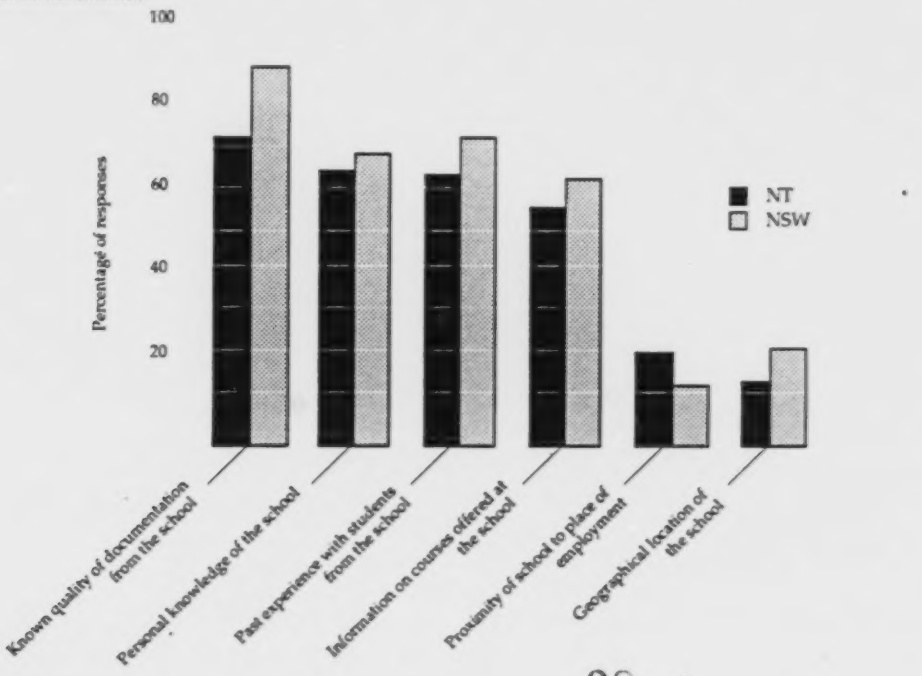
Percentage of employers rating items

School-related Characteristic	1	2	1 and 2	MEAN for 1-4
21. Geographical location of school	4(2)	10(19)	13(21)	3.6
22. Proximity of school to place of employment	2(4)	18(8)	20(12)	3.8
23. Past experience with students from the school	27(31)	35(40)	62(71)	2.3
24. Personal knowledge of the school	37(25)	27(41)	63(67)	2.2
25. Known quality of documentation from the school	37(38)	33(48)	71(87)	2
26. Information on courses offered at the school	31(24)	23(37)	54(61)	2.3

Note: NSW figures are in brackets.

FIGURE 3

Percentage of Employers Who Take the Applicant's Previously Attended School into Account During the Selection Process and Also Rate Highly Various School-Related Characteristics.



It is important to note that for these items only about one quarter of the employers (about 50) responded which means that conclusions drawn from the data are tentative. In both the NSW and NT studies, the 'Known quality of documentation from the school' was considered by most respondents to be important. In both studies, geographical factors received little support from respondents.

2.4 IMPORTANCE EMPLOYERS PLACED ON SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOLS

Questionnaire items 28 - 36.

Employers were asked the following question:

> *'How important is each of the following in providing you with information about particular schools?'*

Various factors (see Table 2.4) were rated on a 1 ('very important') to 4 ('not important') scale by respondents. Table 2.4 shows the percentage of employers rating items '1' and '2'. Combined percentages for '1' and '2', and a mean rating for each item is shown. Figure 4 shows percentages of NT and NSW employers rating items '1' or '2'.

TABLE 2.4

Importance Employers Placed on Various Sources of Information About a School. Items 28 -35.

Percentage of employers rating items

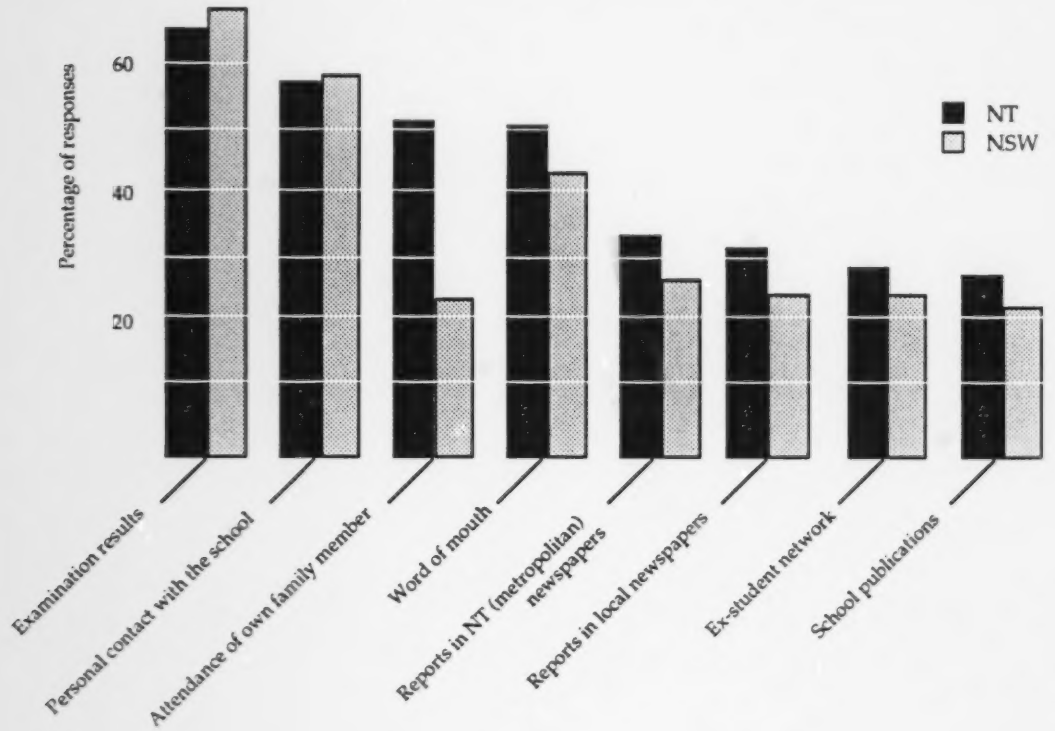
DOCUMENT	1	2	1 and 2	MEAN for 1-4
28. Word of mouth	20(9)	30(35)	50(43)	2.6
29. Attendance of own family member	27(11)	24(11)	51(23)	2.5
30. Examination results	31(32)	34(36)	65(68)	2.2
31. Reports in local (*suburban) newspapers	7(1)	24(23)	31(24)	3
32. Reports in NT (*metropolitan) newspapers	9(3)	24(23)	33(26)	3
33. Personal contact with the school	25(25)	31(33)	57(58)	2.4
34. School publications	6(1)	21(20)	27(22)	3.1
35. Ex-student network	6(4)	21(20)	28(24)	3.1

* - denotes the wording used in the NSW study.

Note: NSW figures are in brackets.

FIGURE 4

Percentage of Employers Highly Rating Items as 'Important' in Providing Information about Particular Schools



In both studies about 85% responded to these items.

A majority of respondents rated information about a school derived from examination results as being important. Opinion was quite evenly divided on the following items: 'Personal contact with the school'; 'Attendance of own family member'; and 'Word of mouth. The other attributes were seen by a substantial majority of employers to be not important as a means of providing them with information about schools.

2.5 IMPORTANCE PLACED ON SCHOOL SUBJECTS

Questionnaire items 37-50

Employers were asked:

'What importance do you place on the following group of subjects?'

They were requested to express this using a 1 ('very important') to 4 ('not important') rating scale. Their responses are shown in Table 2.5 and Figure 5.

TABLE 2.5

Importance Employers Placed on Subjects. Items 37-48.

Percentage of employers rating items

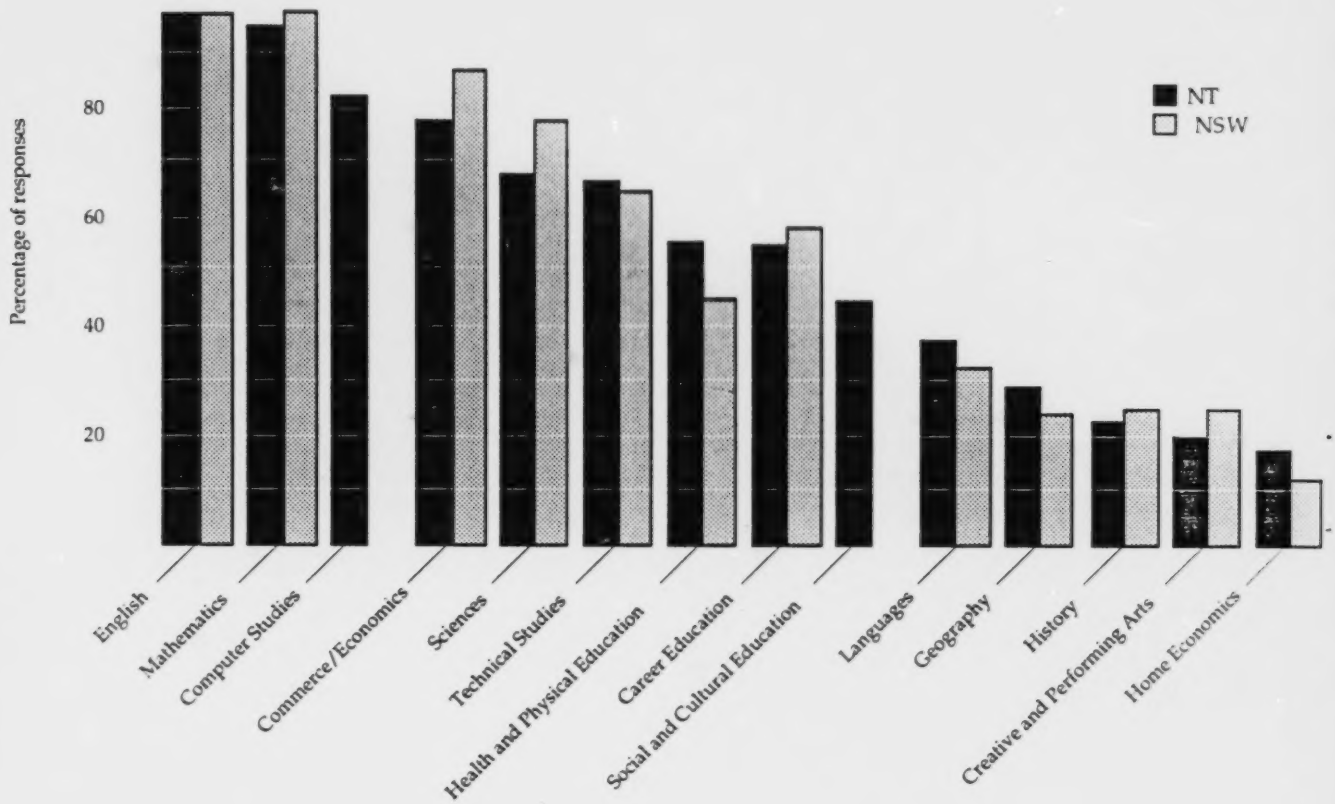
Subject	1	2	1 and 2	MEAN for 1-4
37. Geography	5(1)	24(23)	29(24)	2.9
38. Commerce/Economics	28(35)	50(52)	78(87)	2
39. History	3(1)	19(24)	23(25)	3
40. Health and Physical Education	14(9)	41(35)	55(44)	2.5
41. Mathematics	71(74)	23(24)	94(97)	1.4
42. Creative and Performing Arts	4(5)	16(20)	20(25)	3.2
42. (a) Social and Cultural Education**	10	34	44	2.7
43. English	78(74)	18(22)	96(96)	1.3
44. Sciences	31(33)	36(45)	68(78)	2.1
45. Languages	9(5)	28(27)	37(32)	2.8
46. Home Economics	5(1)	12(10)	17(12)	3.3
47. Technical Studies	27(29)	39(35)	66(64)	2.2
47. (a) Computer Studies**	36	47	82	1.9
48. Career Education	21(22)	33(36)	54(58)	2.4

** *Items not included in NSW study.*

Note: NSW figures are in brackets.

FIGURE 5

Percentage of Employers Rating Subjects '1' or '2' as Important.



In both studies, nearly all respondents saw English and Mathematics as being important to very important. These subjects were followed by another arbitrarily defined 'group' of subjects receiving high ratings from more than 50% of respondents. These were: Computer Studies, Commerce/Economics, Sciences, Technical Studies, Career Education, and Health and Physical Education. Social and Cultural Education, Languages, Geography, History, Creative and Performing Arts and Home Economics were the next 'group' receiving high ratings from less than 50% of employers.

Employers were also asked to state whether they took into account, when selecting employees, the subjects applicants had studied. In the NT, 86% of the respondents indicated that they did. This is only slightly less than the percentage of NSW respondents (92%) who indicated likewise.

2.6 USEFULNESS OF VARIOUS FEATURES OF REPORTS

Questionnaire items 51 - 57.

Employers were asked to respond to the following question:

> *'School reports may contain various features. How useful are each of the following for selecting school leavers for employment?'*

Responses are presented in Table 2.6 and Figure 6.

TABLE 2.6

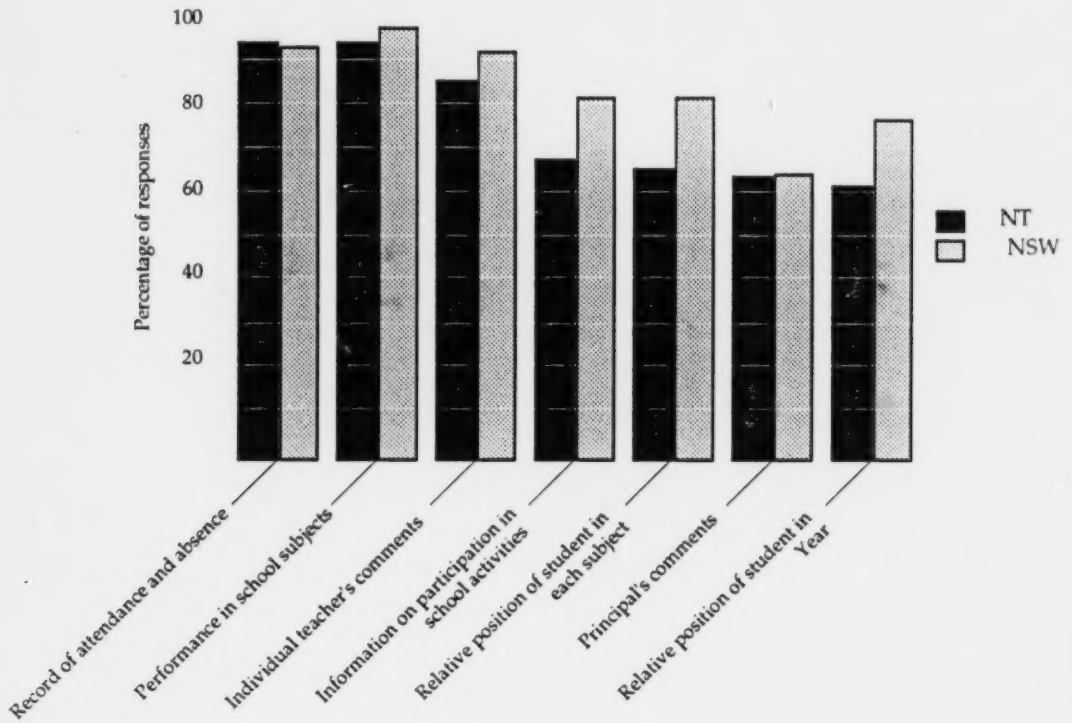
Importance Employers Placed on Various Report Features. Items 51-57.

	Percentage of employers rating items			
Features of Reports	1	2	1 and 2	MEAN for 1-4
51. Principal's comments	22(19)	41(45)	63(64)	2.3
52. Record of attendance and absence	62(54)	32(39)	94(93)	1.5
53. Individual teachers' comments	46(47)	39(45)	85(92)	1.7
54. Information on participation in school activities (eg. sport, debating)	19(29)	48(52)	67(81)	2.2
55. Performance in school subjects	55(63)	39(34)	94(97)	1.5
56. Relative position of student in each subject	24(36)	41(44)	65(81)	2.2
57. Relative position of student in Year	12(34)	49(42)	61(76)	2.4

Note: NSW figures are in brackets.

FIGURE 6

Percentage of Employers Highly Rating Various Report Features



The highest proportion of employers rated highly records of attendance and performance in school subjects as useful for selection purposes. This was followed by comments from individual teachers. Although around two-thirds of employers highly rated the other items as useful, support in the NT study was, in each case, less than in the NSW study. In particular, less NT respondents tended to rate the importance of knowing the relative position of students (applicants) either within a subject or a year, than did the NSW respondents.

2.7 PURPOSES OTHER THAN SELECTION FOR WHICH SCHOOL LEAVER DOCUMENTATION IS USED

Questionnaire item 59

Employers were asked:

> *'Do you use documentation presented by school leavers for purposes other than selection?'.*

From the 194 employer responses it was quite clear, in both studies, that a substantial majority of employers (79% and 72% in NT and NSW respectively) do **not** use school leaver documentation for purposes other than for selection.

Questionnaire items 60-65

For those employers who indicated that they did make use of school leaver documentation for other purposes, five examples of 'other purposes' were listed for respondents to tick if used by their organisations. Only 41 employers responded to these items.

Details are provided in Table 2.7 and Figure 7.

TABLE 2.7

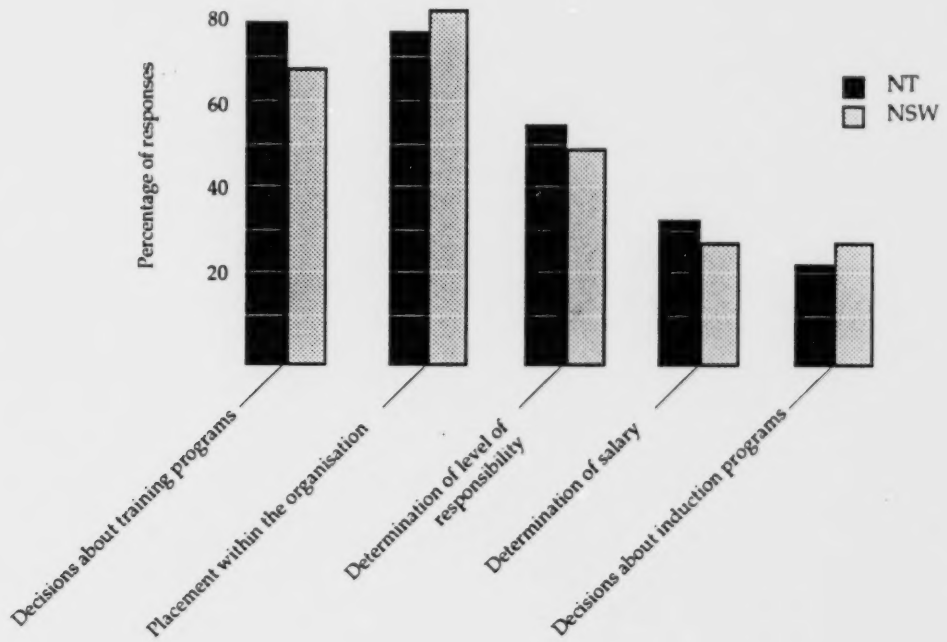
Use of School Leaver Documentation for Other Purposes. Items 60 - 64.

OTHER PURPOSES	No. NT	No. NSW	% NT	% NSW
60. Placement within the organisation	30	-	76	81
61. Decisions about induction programs	9	-	22	27
62. Decisions about training programs	32	-	78	67
63. Determination of salary	13	-	32	27
64. Determination of level of responsibility	22	-	54	48

Note: The NSW report provided percentages of respondents and did not provide details of numbers of respondents.

FIGURE 7

Percentage of Employers Using Documentation for Purposes other than for Selection



Whilst it is important to bear in mind that these percentages derive from the reasonably small number (20%) of employer respondents using documentation for other purposes, a majority of this group saw the documents as useful for: 1) 'decisions about training programs'; and 2) 'placement within the organisation'.

By comparison, the results from the NT and NSW studies are quite similar.

2.8 IMPORTANCE PLACED ON SCHOOL LEAVERS PRESENTING A FOLIO

Questionnaire item 66.

Employers were asked:

> *'Is it important that a school leaver provide a folio of documents when seeking employment?'.*

Of the 197 respondents for this item, 79% indicated that it was important that a folio be provided by applicants. The NSW study reported 94% of respondents indicating the same.

Questionnaire item 67 (open-ended)

Further, employers were asked:

'If yes, what would you wish to see presented in such a folio?'.

One hundred and thirty eight employers commented on what they thought should comprise a school leaver's folio. The ten most frequently mentioned documents are incorporated in Table 2.8. Full details of responses are included in Appendix 2.

TABLE 2.8

Documents That Should be Included in a School Leaver Folio. Item 67.

Number and Percentage of employers' individual comments

Document Types	Count	% NT	% NSW
School reports	55	15	(53)
Resumes	35	10	(25)
School references	29	8	(41)
Relevant certificates	26	7	(36)
Examination results	24	7	(27)
Work experience reports	24	7	(40)
Personal references	22	6	(29)
Attendance records	13	4	(0)
As stated in questionnaire items 6-13	10	3	(0)
Qualifications	9	3	(0)

Note: The figures in brackets are the NSW figures cited as percentages of employers. This contrasts with the NT percentages which represent percentages of various documents mentioned. As a result of this, and the different methods of data analysis used for this item in the two studies, readers should be aware of the difficulties associated with comparing the findings.

Of the responses to this question the most commonly mentioned (55 times) document to be incorporated into the Folio was the 'School report'. This was followed by 'Resume' which was listed 35 times.

2.9 DOCUMENT PACKAGES MOST PREFERRED

Questionnaire item 68.

Employers were presented with the following situation:

> *'Below is a description of various 'packages' of documentation which school leavers may present when seeking employment. Please consider the various packages and rank them in terms of their usefulness for your selection purposes (1- most useful: 4 - least useful)'.*

Responses are presented in Table 2.9 and Figure 9.

TABLE 2.9

Preferred Document Packages. Item 68.

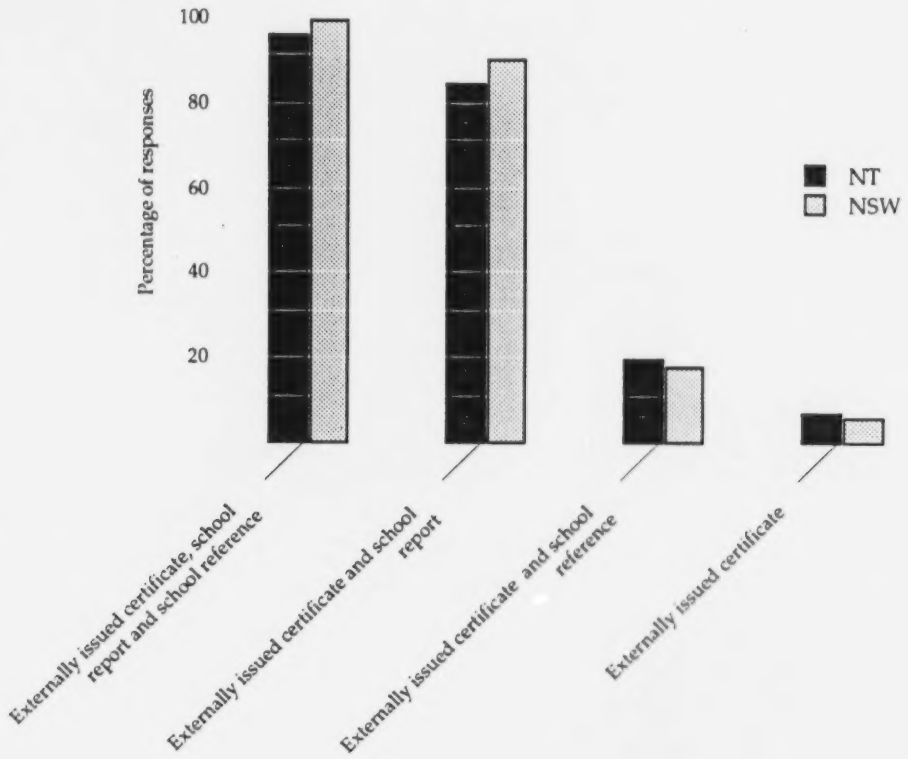
Percentage of employers ranking items

DOCUMENT PACKAGE	1	2	1 and 2	MEAN for 1-4
Package A: Externally issued Certificate School report School reference	89 (88)	6 (10)	95 (98)	1.2
Package B: Externally issued Certificate School report	8 (13)	76 (76)	84 (89)	2.1
Package C: Externally issued Certificate School reference	1 (1)	17 (15)	18 (16)	2.8
Package D: Externally issued Certificate	2 (0)	2 (4)	5 (4)	3.9

Note: NSW figures are in brackets.

FIGURE 9

Percentage of Employers Ranking Various Documentation Packages First or Second



The response rate for this item was 81%.

It is evident from both studies that a majority of respondents would prefer packages which provided them with more, rather than less, information for selection purposes. Very few, in both studies, preferred Package D which contained an externally issued certificate only. It is also clear that, given the option of either a school report or a school reference, substantially more employers view the report to be more useful for selection purposes than the reference.

2.10 INFORMATION ON THE BOARD OF STUDIES CERTIFICATES

Questionnaire items 69 - 74

Employers were asked the following question:

> *'For the purpose of selecting school leavers for employment, how important is it that the NT Board of Studies Certificates contain the following information?'.*

They were asked to rate a range of items of information on a 1 ('very important') to 4 ('not important') scale in terms of their respective importance in selecting school leavers for employment.

TABLE 2.10

Importance of Items of Information for Selection Purposes on Certificates. Items 69 -74.

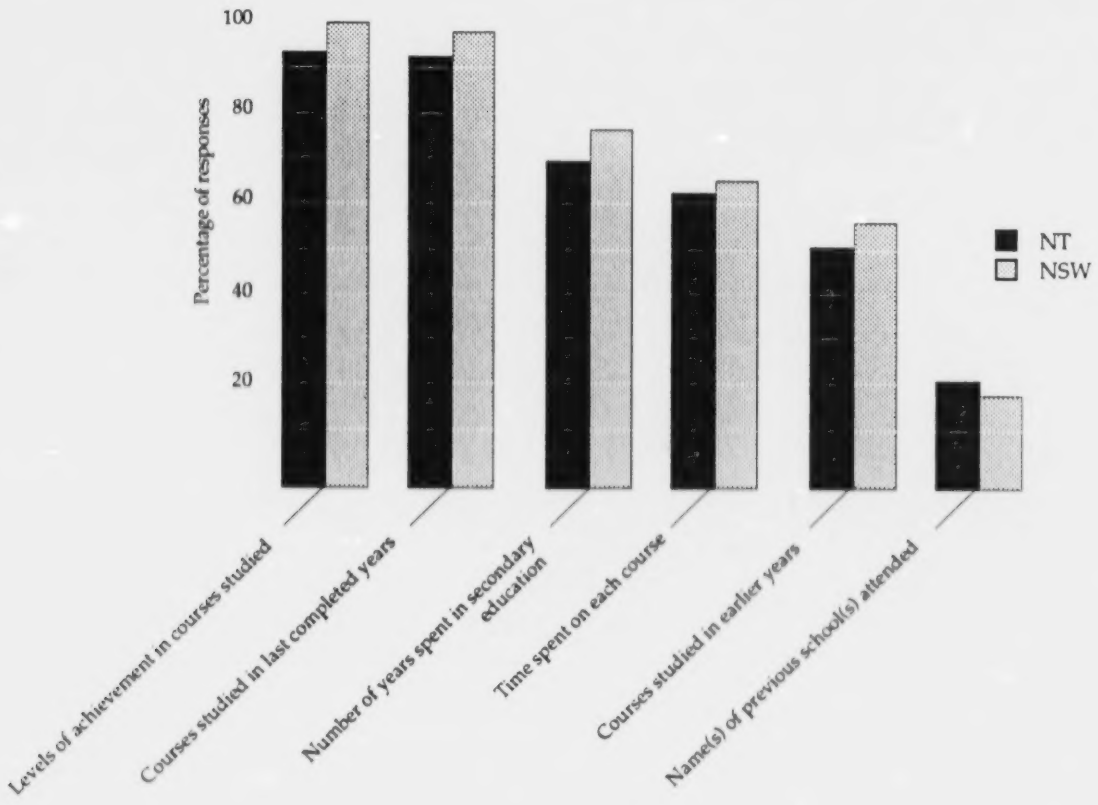
Percentage of employers rating items

INFORMATION ON CERTIFICATE	1	2	1 and 2	MEAN for 1-4
69. Courses studied in last completed years	71 (85)	22 (14)	94 (99)	1.4
70. Courses studied in earlier years	13 (15)	38 (42)	52 (57)	2.4
71. Levels of achievement in courses studied	71 (85)	24 (14)	95 (100)	1.4
72. Time spent on each course	23 (15)	41 (51)	64 (66)	2.2
73. Name of previous school(s) attended	5 (2)	17 (17)	22 (19)	3.1
74. Number of years spent in secondary education	34 (38)	37 (40)	71(78)	2

Note: NSW figures are in brackets.

FIGURE 10

Percentage of Employers Highly Rating Items of Information to be Included on Certificates



The average response rate for these items was 94%.

In both studies, a substantial majority of employers attached a rating of 'very important' to 'levels of achievement in courses studied' and the specification of 'courses studied in last completed years' as items to be incorporated into the NT Board Certificates. A majority of employers attached importance to number of years spent in secondary education and time spent on each course. Only about one-fifth of employers from both studies attached importance to the inclusion of name(s) of previous school(s) attended.

2.11 REPORT FORMATS MOST MEANINGFUL FOR SELECTION

Questionnaire item 76

Employers were asked:

> *'Please consider the 'examples of different reports shown below and rank them in terms of their meaningfulness for your selection purposes (1 - most meaningful; 6 - least meaningful)?'*

Responses are included in Table 2.11 and Figure 11.

TABLE 2.11

Meaningfulness of Various Ways of Presenting Student Grades for the Purposes of Selection. Item 76.

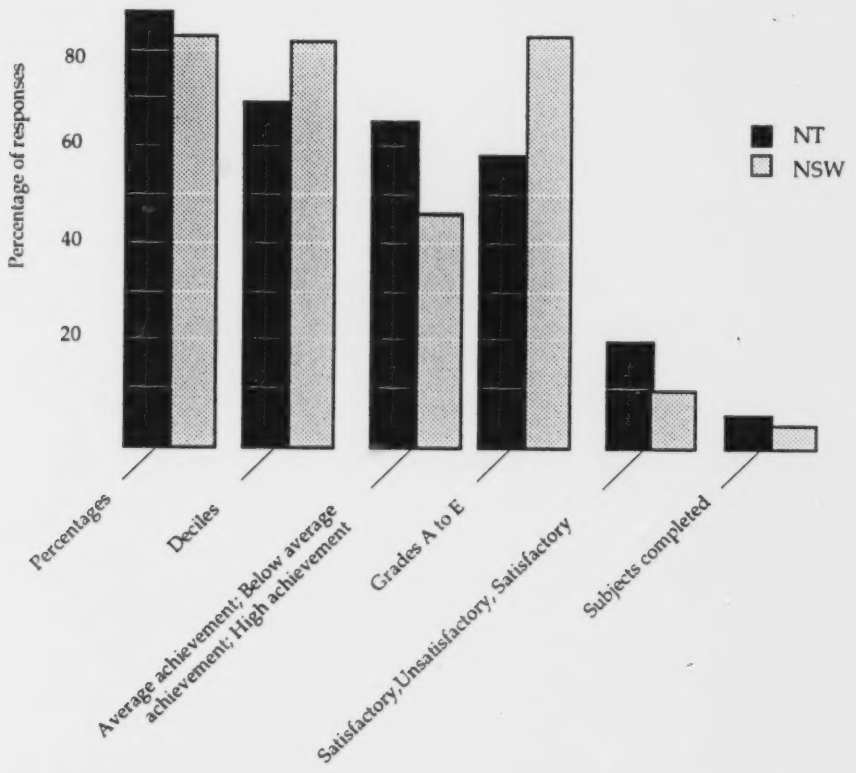
Percentage of employers ranking items

REPORTING FORMAT	1	2	3	1, 2 & 3	MEAN for 1-6
Subjects completed	2 (0)	1 (0)	1 (1)	4 (2)	5.6
Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory	1 (1)	6 (2)	13 (5)	19 (9)	4.3
Average/Below Average/High	11 (8)	23 (13)	30 (26)	65 (46)	3
Percentage	55 (43)	20 (26)	14 (14)	88 (83)	1.9
Grades A to E	18 (35)	26 (32)	14 (14)	58 (83)	3.1
Deciles	15 (12)	26 (31)	28 (40)	69 (82)	3

Note: NSW figures are in brackets.

FIGURE 11

Percentage of Employers Highly ranking the Report Formats most Meaningful for Selection Purposes



For these items the response rate was an average of 73%.

A substantial majority of employers, in both studies, highly ranked a reporting format showing percentages. This preference was clearly their first preference. About a two-thirds majority of NT respondents ranked reporting formats which indicated performance in terms of the 'average', 'deciles' and 'grades' in the top four.

Neither the bulk of NSW nor NT employers favoured a report format which indicated 'satisfactory or unsatisfactory' or one which provided information on subjects completed only.

2.12 INFORMATION ON PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

Questionnaire item 78

'The following are factors on which information may be provided as part of the certification package. Please place a tick alongside the five factors which you think are most useful for the purposes of selecting school leavers for employment?'.

TABLE 2.12

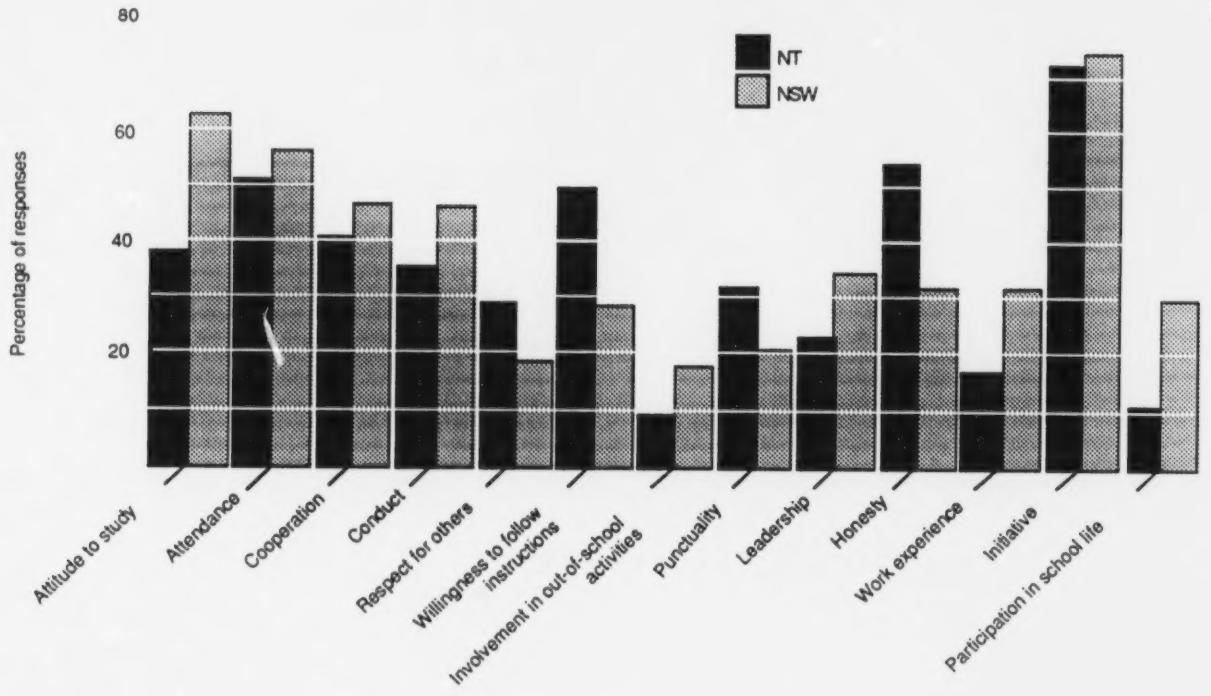
Personal Attributes to be Reported Upon in a Documentation Package. Item 78.

Percentage of employers indicating items

Document	NT	NSW
Attitude to study	38	63
Attendance	51	56
Cooperation	41	47
Conduct	36	46
Respect for others	29	19
Willingness to follow instructions	50	29
Involvement in out-of-school activities	9	18
Punctuality	32	21
Leadership	23	35
Honesty	54	32
Work experience	17	32
Initiative	72	74
Participation in school life	11	30

FIGURE 12

Percentage of employers Indicating Factors Considered to be Most Useful for Selection



In both studies, most support was found for 'initiative' as a personal attribute to be reported upon in a certification package. The five most frequently selected attributes were: 1) initiative, *(initiative)*; 2) honesty, *(attitude to study)*; 3) attendance, *(attendance)*; 4) willingness to follow instructions, *(cooperation)*; and 5) cooperation, *(conduct)*. *(Note: NSW top five items are in italics.)*

Employers were also asked whether there were other important factors on which they would want to have information recorded. No other 'important factor' was found frequently. Please see Appendix 2.

2.13 COMMUNICATING TO EMPLOYERS CHANGES TO ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Questionnaire item 80

Employers were asked:

'What are the best methods of informing you and other employers of changes to the reporting processes?'.

Responses are presented in Table 2.13.

TABLE 2.13

Methods of Communicating Changes to the Reporting Process to Employers. Item 80.

Questionnaire open-ended item 80: 137 employers responded: 184 comments were recorded. Some of the results appear in this table.

Comments	Count	Percentage of comments
Mail to personnel/employers	58	32 (44)
Through the media	34	18 (34)
On Certificates/Reports	21	11 (3)
Through professional/industry organisations	15	8 (27)
Regular bulletins	12	7 (5)
Employer leaflets	10	5 (19)
Departmental seminars/briefing days	5	3 (17)
Distribution through the CES	4	2 (3)
Through schools/career advisors	4	2 (2)
Liaison person within the Department	4	2 (2)
Samples to personnel groups	3	2 (2)
Public Service notices	3	2 (1)
Not needed	3	2 (1)
Through research activities	3	2
Mail which also requires some sort of reply	2	1
Uniformity over time reduces need to communicate changes	2	1 (1)
Detail the changes in 'layperson's' terms	1	1 (1)

In both studies, the notion of mailing changes to reporting to employers was found to be the most commonly mentioned method. 'Through the media' was the next most frequently mentioned.

2.14 EMPLOYERS ASSISTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO INFORM THE PUBLIC ABOUT CHANGES TO THE REPORTING PROCESS

Questionnaire item 81

Employers were asked:

> *'How can employers assist the Department of Education in informing the public about changes to reporting processes?'.*

Eighty-four employers responded offering a collective total of 141 suggestions. The most frequently mentioned suggestion was that it was **not** the role of employers. Full details are included in Appendix 2.

2.15 GENERAL COMMENTS

Questionnaire item 82

Employers were asked:

> *'Any other comments?'*

Fifty-seven employers made further comment. Whilst these comments were difficult to classify due to their complexity and individual nature, the most commonly mentioned comment was that there was a need to enhance the quality of students' Mathematics and English. However this was only mentioned 11 times. Ten comments offering positive feedback about the questionnaire were also recorded.

For a more complete list of comments see Appendix 2.

WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

48

3.1 WORKSHOP PROCEDURES

During the two discussion sessions, the employers worked in four groups. Each group was allocated a topic or set of related topics and a series of probe questions which could be used by the group leader as a stimulus to discussion (see Appendix 4). Also, copies of the draft report which had been distributed to participants three days prior to the workshop, and which contained the survey data, were available to groups as a resource. By the end of the second period of discussion, each group was expected to have framed a number of recommendations, comments and suggestions for consideration during the plenary session. The workshop as a whole then endorsed or amended each of them. Following the workshop, a list of recommendations, comments and suggestions was compiled and circulated to participants for comment. These and the subsequent comments made are reported below in their final form after completion of this process.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO THE CURRICULUM

(i) That consideration be given to the cessation of 'automatic progression' through learning units or levels unless a student is successful at the preceding stage.

(ii) That pre-requisite completion levels be established in specific subjects for Years 11 and 12.

(iii) That consideration be given to re-establishing career/guidance teacher positions in schools, over and above existing staffing levels, i.e. additional resources be allocated to enable effective counselling throughout secondary schooling.

(iv) That the provision of career, vocational and educational guidance take place throughout secondary education, but particularly in Year 10 to enable students to make correct subject choices for TAFE, Year 11 and Year 12.

(v) That the Department of Education and Board of Studies ensure that sufficient information be widely available to enable employers to understand the nature, content and level of subjects studied and reported on.

(vi) That each student on completion of Year 10 attain a satisfactory level of achievement, at least in:

English
Mathematics
Science
Social and Cultural Education

Further, this level of achievement be determined system-wide and monitored by methods of external assessment. Consideration should also be given to the inclusion of additional subject areas, including Business Education and Technical Studies.

3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS

(i) That teachers are made aware that school reports reach an audience including employers.

(ii) That documentation show the last level of study in each subject area.

(iii) That students be made aware of the content of the survey report regarding documents seen as important by employers.

(iv) That students be assisted by teachers/parents in compiling the portfolio, but overall it should be a student responsibility/initiative.

(v) That education staff liaise with the business sector to explain/promote the portfolio, certification, etc.

(vi) That percentages rather than grades be used to show student achievement for certification purposes.

The group working on this topic also recorded the following comment, which was endorsed at the plenary session:

(a) Work Experience is seen as valuable by employers, who are also concerned at decreasing levels of participation by students.

3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO INTERVIEWS AND PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

(i) That school leavers bring along any documentation that may present a clearer picture for the employer regarding the attributes of the applicant, in particular:

Certificates
School Reports
School References

(ii) That a publicity brochure, jointly produced by the Business Education Council and the Department of Education, be sent to parents outlining the -

. key issues coming out of this research

. joint-responsibility of parents and teachers to prepare students for the workforce

(iii) That schools provide instruction and tuition (including role play) for students to prepare and enhance their performance during an interview situation.

The group working on these topics also recorded the following comments, which were endorsed during the plenary session:

(a) It is essential school leavers are encouraged to have a positive attitude towards the workplace. This is a joint responsibility among employers, parents and the school.

(b) Regardless of the specific vacancy, applicants should be clean and appropriately dressed for the interview.

(c) Employers should give a complete and honest picture of the work environment, job description, benefits, and entitlements and obligations.

3.5 RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYERS

(i) That the student portfolio be endorsed as a foundation document, but that students be encouraged to individualise them. Schools should be careful not to organise the contents on behalf of students.

(ii) That, although there are important constraints on employers' time and resources, employers still provide accurate information requirements for specific jobs/occupations as well as any additional attributes which are deemed appropriate in selection.

(iii) That employers recognise an obligation to make maximum use of current Department of Education assessment tools, and if selection tests are used by employers they should be valid, reliable and appropriate.

(iv) That employers recognise the content of some current Year 11 and Year 12 courses as relevant and meaningful in pre-vocational terms and give appropriate credit for them. Futhermore, that consultations continue or start between the Department of Education and employer groups to ensure continuing relevance of such courses.

(v) That the concept of employers adopting schools has considerable potential and should be investigated further by the Business Education Council.

The following comments recorded by this group were endorsed during the plenary session:

(a) Employers are expected to provide school leavers with a safe and healthy work environment and opportunities for their ongoing training and development.

(b) The Employers' Workshop is concerned about ensuring that employment opportunities continue to exist for school leavers in the changing working environment.

In addition, and due to time constraints, the group only briefly addressed the issue of selection criteria. The following suggestions were adopted at the plenary session:

(c) Selection criteria should exist for each job and applicants should have access to them.

(d) Selection criteria should be specific, relevant and consistent with job requirements.

3.6 WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS FEEDBACK

Following the workshop, copies of the draft recommendations were distributed to all participants with the exception of the Department of Education resource personnel who were involved with the workshop and the report's authors. Participants were given two weeks in which to make comment on the draft recommendations. Nine participants took the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft recommendations. Of these, three represented business or professional organisations, two were employers, two were senior Department of Education employees, one represented a Technical and Further Education institution and one represented the Department of Labour and Administrative Services.

Comments made were sufficiently varied to reveal no clear pattern. No more than two comments were made on the same subject. Three general concerns were expressed regarding the recommendations: firstly, the relatively small number of employers actually attending the workshop; secondly, the important and continuing need to maintain employment opportunities for school leavers, and third, the declining proportion of students participating in work experience programs.

Several specific comments were made in relation to particular recommendations. These may be summarised as follows:

Recommendation 3.1(i)

- That considerable variations existing among schools and between course entrance requirements makes this proposal difficult to implement.

Recommendation 3.1(iii)

- That such career/guidance teacher positions should come from within existing staffing levels, rather than being created as new positions.
- That this recommendation be deleted entirely and replaced by an expanded 3.1(iv) - see below.

Recommendation 3.1(iv)

- The expanded recommendation should read:

  That the provision of career, vocational and educational guidance take place throughout secondary education, but particularly in year 10 to enable students

to make correct subject choices for TAFE, Year 11 and Year 12. Further, that consideration be given to providing this service through one or a combination of the following:

- *From within existing teaching resources*
- *Utilising the services of other Government Departments and Authorities (both Commonwealth and Territory) e.g. Commonwealth Employment Services, Universities, TAFE etc.*
- *From within private enterprise, including organisations such as Confederation of Industry and Commerce, Business Education Council of Australia, Australian Institute of Management, etc.*
- *From within the community.*

Recommendation 3.1(vi)

- That it is imperative for external assessment not only to take place, but also for results to be made available to employers.

Recommendation 3.2(vi)

- That the results of external assessment be shown separately from internal assessment.

Recommendation 3.4(a)

- That the Work Health Authority, rather than the Department of Education, is the appropriate body responsible for monitoring the work environment in terms of safety and health.

Recommendation 3.4(c) and (d)

- That it is inappropriate for workshop participants to comment on matters relating to selection criteria.

DISCUSSION

4.1 TECHNICAL STUDIES

As this discussion is brief, further information can be obtained from the Curriculum and Assessment Branch of the Northern Territory Department of Education. This section will involve discussion of the following areas of the study: 1) the instrument; 2) data collection; 3) data analysis; and 4) presentation.

4.2 THE INSTRUMENT

The instruments used in both studies were almost identical and only slight changes were necessary for the NT study.

From conversations with various employers, it was apparent that the NSW questionnaire was presented in a clear manner and it was evident that steps had been taken to ensure the elimination of education jargon and the provision of appropriate explanatory notes. Very few criticisms of the questionnaire were recorded and responses indicated that only some aspects were ambiguous. In particular, the items 68 and 76 asking employers to rank order alternatives appeared to cause some respondents to **rate** rather than **rank** order.

4.3 DATA COLLECTION

Rotary's involvement in the collection of data proved to be invaluable. Whilst there were some difficulties in ensuring that the questionnaires directed to Rotarians and employers all arrived at the correct destinations, the notion of marshalling this sort of personalised support has the benefits of ensuring a higher return and arguably a better quality of response possibly due to the imminent follow-up by members of an established international organisation. Nevertheless the overall response rate of under 50% was disappointing. Many explanations for this could be suggested, such as:

- the questionnaire was not sufficiently 'user friendly'
- other pressures on employer time
- the frequency with which employers are surveyed
- a lack of interest among employers in the issues being surveyed.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

In this study respondents were encouraged to introduce other information not cited

as an item to rate or rank. An 'others (please specify)' item was listed following each block of items. In addition, 6 open-ended questions were included. These questions were primarily designed to enable the researchers to gain a broad picture, however subsequent quantitative data analysis posed some difficulty.

As employers were provided with the opportunity to express themselves individually, attempts to group their responses involved some researcher interpretation of what the employer's response may have meant to him/her. Bearing this in mind, two courses of action were taken. First, one researcher classified all responses to open-ended items with consultation from other researchers; and second, responses were placed into new categories if they did not fit easily within those already established.

It was also decided that, for the responses to open-ended questionnaire items, NSW results should **not** be illustrated alongside NT results because they would have been derived differently.

4.5 DATA PRESENTATION

In the NSW report the data are presented in a simplified form within the body of the text and in full in the appendixes. Within the body of the text, many tables reveal a construction of two columns which show 'for' and 'against' percentages of employers' views. The percentages of employers rating particular items '1' and '2' are combined to derive a 'positive' score and percentages for '3' and '4' are treated likewise to derive a 'negative' score. This possibly makes the material easier to understand for the reader but the distinction between 'for' and 'against' is arbitrary and the percentage for each rating is not shown.

The NT report borrows from NSW but items (involving employers rating or ranking items on a 1 - 4 scale) are presented showing the individual values for '1' and '2'. This assists the reader to ascertain the 'strength' of perceptions.

In addition to showing percentages for ratings '1' and '2', a **mean rating score** for the item was included. This mean score was derived by: 1) attaching a numerical value to each of the rating points along the scale i.e 1=1, 2=2, 3=3 and 4=4; 2) multiplying the number of employers rating a particular point along the scale by the assigned numeric value; 3) summing the scores; and 4) dividing this

derived score by the number of respondents for the item. This information may assist the reader to further guage the 'strength' of support for a particular item because each of the ratings were taken into account in arriving at the mean rating score. The inclusion of mean rating scores enables items within a group or set to be ranked giving an indication of relative strength.

4.6 THE WORKSHOP

The actual number of employers and Rotarians who were finally able to attend the workshop was lower than was hoped. It was originally intended that a Rotarian would act as leader for each discussion group, but unfortunately the shortage of Rotarians who could attend precluded this. Similarly, it proved necessary to reduce the number of discussion groups from five to four to cater for the decreased numbers.

Nevertheless, apart from these minor difficulties, the agenda was completed in full and the workshop endorsed a range of recommendations, suggestions and comments.

There was some criticism of the extent to which group discussion may have been 'channelled' by the probe questions and that certain important issues may consequently have been neglected. The organisers were aware of these dangers, but considered that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages of this approach for the following reasons:

- the total discussion time was relatively short
- group members were not used to working together
- a clear focus encouraged on-task discussions
- workshop discussion was intended to build upon survey findings
- documented recommendations were required.

It could also be argued that much of the instructive and insightful debate during group discussions is in no way adequately represented by the bare list of recommendations and suggestions finally recorded and endorsed by the workshop. Perhaps this was largely unavoidable. However, involvement in the discussion process may well remain as a major hidden benefit for all those who participated.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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The more noteworthy findings have been summarised into arbitrary groupings. It will be evident to readers that a number of the 'findings' may pertain to more than one group. They may pertain concurrently to school leavers, the Department, the Board of Studies, to teachers and to schools. Consequently it would be advisable for readers to acquaint themselves with the full list of findings.

Because of the way the Workshop was organised, the outcome of the day's discussions were summarised in the recommendations, comments and suggestions previously reported in Chapter 3. They will not, therefore, be reproduced here. However, it may be noted that, although expressed in somewhat different form, the Workshop recommendations in many cases parallel and support the survey findings.

5.1 FINDINGS PERTAINING TO SCHOOL LEAVERS

1.1 Personal Attributes Of School Leavers

1.1.1 A high percentage of employers placed particular emphasis on presentation of self, oral communication and standard of dress as important attributes for school leavers.

1.1.2 Presentation and organisation of supporting documents was seen by most employers to be almost as important as the above-mentioned personal attributes.

1.2 Employers Taking Applicant's Subjects Studied into Account During Selection

1.2.1 Most employers did take into consideration the subjects the school leaver applicant had studied.

1.3 Importance Employers Placed on Various Subjects

1.3.1 Nearly all employers placed high importance on English and Mathematics.

1.3.2 A substantial majority of employers placed high importance on Computer Studies, Commerce/ Economics and about two-thirds placed high importance on the Sciences and Technical Studies.

1.3.3 Mixed opinion was found with regard to Social and Cultural Education, Health and Physical Education, and Career Education.

1.3.4 A substantial majority of employers did not place high importance on Geography, History, the Arts and Home Economics.

1.4 Use Of School Leaver Documentation for Purposes Other Than for Selection

1.4.1 If employers made use of the documentation presented by school leavers for purposes other than selection, the most frequently indicated were: 1) decisions about training programs; and 2) placement within the organisation.

5.2 FINDINGS PERTAINING TO THE NT BOARD OF STUDIES

2.1 Documentation Packages Most Useful for Selection Purposes

2.1.1 A high percentage of employers viewed a documentation package which contained an externally issued certificate, a school report and a school reference to be considerably more useful for selection purposes than a package which only contained an externally issued certificate.

2.1.2 Certificates reporting the results of external exams were rated very highly by employers.

2.2 Information to be Contained on Board Certificates

2.2.1 Most employers attached a high level of importance to the inclusion of information on Board Certificates pertaining to: 1) levels of achievement in courses studied; and 2) courses studied in last completed years.

2.2.2 About two-thirds of employers in both studies placed importance on the inclusion, on the Board Certificate, of information regarding number of years spent in secondary education and time spent on each course.

2.2.3 Employer opinion was mixed with regard to the importance of including information about courses studied in earlier years.

2.2.4 Information about the name(s) of previous school(s) attended was considered not important by a substantial majority of respondents in both studies.

2.3 Personal Attributes to be Reported Upon in a School Leaver Documentation Package

2.3.1 Employers rated the following five personal attributes as the most important to be reported upon within a documentation package: 1) initiative; 2) honesty; 3) attendance; 4) willingness to follow instructions; and 5) cooperation

5.3 FINDINGS PERTAINING TO REPORTING

3.1 Documents

3.1.1 Employers, in general, did not call for the results from external exams rather than school-based assessment results - they rated both as useful.

3.2 Importance Employers Placed on Various Report Features for Selection Purposes

3.2.1 Most employers rated highly report features which included records of attendance and performance in school subjects as useful for selection purposes.

3.2.2 Individual teacher's comments were highly rated as important by considerably more employers than individual principal's comments.

3.2.3 Considerably more employers attached importance to performance in school subjects than relative position of students in each subject.

3.3 Meaningfulness of Reporting Formats for Selection Purposes

3.3.1 The most 'meaningful' method of presenting student performance to most employers was in the form of percentages.

3.3.2 The next most meaningful methods indicated were: 1) average/ below average/high; 2) deciles; 3) grades A - E.

3.3.3 The least meaningful, for selection purposes, according to a substantial majority of employers in both studies was: 1) satisfactory/unsatisfactory; and 2) subjects completed.

5.4 FINDINGS PERTAINING TO SCHOOLS

4.1 Importance of Schools Previously Attended

4.1.1 Three-quarters of employers indicated that, during the selection process, they would not take into account the school previously attended by the applicant.

4.1.2 However, if they did, the greatest majority placed a high level of importance on known quality of documentation from the school.

4.2 Sources of Information About a School Considered to be Important by Employers

4.2.1 A majority of employers placed emphasis on the school's examination results as an important indicator.

4.2.2 Employers, in general, were little influenced by newspaper reports, school publications or an ex-student network.

5.5 FINDINGS PERTAINING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

5.1 The Best Methods of Informing Employers of Changes to the Reporting Process:

5.1.1 About one-third of the employer responses recommended that employers would be best informed directly via the mail of any changes to reporting processes.

CONCLUSION

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CONCLUSION

Both the NT and NSW studies have made a deliberate attempt to develop a comprehensive picture of employers' expectations of school leaver applicants. Through these and other such systematic efforts, interested parties (students, schools and the Department of Education) may benefit from a better understanding of employer views and practices during the processes of selecting school leavers. Knowing what employers' views are, broadly speaking, may help students to prepare better applications and to perform better during interviews. Northern Territory schools and the Department, armed with the findings, may be in a better position to make decisions about reporting practices in light of the documentation employers find most useful for selection purposes.

This conclusion will firstly highlight information gained from the highest and lowest rated items. Secondly, information from open-ended questions will be briefly mentioned. Thirdly a brief comparison between the NSW and the NT studies will be made.

The mean rating scores for each of the questionnaire items was used to rank them. Once this was established, it became possible to make comment on the highest and lowest ranked items. The highest ranked items provided a strong message particularly to school leavers but also to schools and to the Department.

6.1 Strong positive views held by almost all respondents

1.1 In terms of a school leaver's personal attributes, employers placed considerable importance on self and oral presentation during the interview. In addition to this, employers tended to take into consideration the subjects the applicant studied and placed considerable importance on English and Mathematics.

1.2 Most employers desired school leaver applicants to present a folio of documents and they indicated that the most useful documentation package for selection purposes should contain an externally issued certificate, a school report and a school reference.

1.3 Regarding the use of the Northern Territory Board of Studies certificates in the selection process, employers placed considerable importance on courses studied in last completed years and levels of achievement in courses studied.

6.2 Strong negative views held by almost all respondents

2.1 Employers indicated that they do not find an externally issued certificate on its own to be useful for selection purposes. They placed little importance on Home Economics, the Arts, and History.

2.2 Employers do not wish Northern Territory Board of Studies certificates to contain information on names of previous schools attended.

2.3 The study did not attempt to differentiate between the requirements for different industries nor for different occupations within the same industry. Two employers commented verbally on this deficiency and suggested that it was an area which merited further attention.

6.3 Open-ended Questionnaire Responses

Whilst these open-ended responses appear in the appendices and they have been used to inform workshop deliberations, in themselves, they do not represent a firm basis on which to draw conclusions.

6.4 Issues raised by the survey

4.1 Both the survey findings and the Workshop recommendations represent the views of only one stakeholder group: the employers. Other stakeholder groups would include the school leavers themselves, their parents and their teachers. Follow-up action on the study would therefore need to take into account not only employer views but also the interests of other stakeholder groups.

4.2 The high value which employers attach to external examination results may well be related to both a familiarity with this method of assessment and a lack of understanding of the available alternatives. The widespread confusion which currently appears to exist concerning moderation procedures would seem to be a case in point. Efforts to improve employer and community understanding of assessment options would therefore be desirable.

4.3 In responding to the survey, employers discounted the importance of some curriculum subjects such as Home Economics, Creative and Performing Arts, History and Geography. This response raises a number of important questions, e.g.

a) Were employers judging the general educational value of these subjects or were they merely judging their value in selecting potential employees?

b) If employers attached little importance to some subjects, should this influence the place of these subjects in the curriculum.

c) How much importance should be attached to the views of employers in comparison with the views of other stakeholders?

d) Were employers in possession of sufficient information about course content in these subjects to make balanced judgements?

e) To what extent do employer views in these subjects represent those of the community?

Questions such as these would need to be addressed in considering the implications of the survey findings for the curriculum. Also do responses reflect the nature of the employer sample? Is the sample biased towards the technology and business sectors of the community and thus an over emphasis on the study of English and Mathematics? Of the 294 questionnaires not returned or completed are other areas of industry adequately represented, i.e. tourism and hospitality, the arts, entertainment and recreation, etc.

4.4 The study did not distinguish between the requirements for different industries nor for different occupations. This limitation has implications which should be considered when interpreting the results for the planning of future action.

4.5. The decision to conduct a major survey such as this, and more particularly to hold a workshop for respondents, the involved community and business and education groups, implies a commitment to take appropriate action in relation to the findings of the survey. The credibility of the whole excercise may well depend upon the perceptions of respondents and others concerning the effectiveness of follow-up action.

REFERENCES

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REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 1

EMPLOYERS' VIEWS ON THE CERTIFICATION OF SCHOOL LEAVERS

Joint Research Project Department of Education, Education Advisory Council, Business Education Council and Rotary International

EMPLOYERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

PART 1 - DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

1. Name of organisation _____

2. Type of industry/service _____

3. Position held by person responding _____

4. Total number of employees _____

5. Estimate of the number of people the organisation recruits directly from school in a 'typical' year _____

   Yr 10 school leavers _____

   Yr 11 school leavers _____

   Yr 12 school leavers _____

For most of the questions which follow, you are asked to consider the range of options provided and rate their importance or usefulness on a four-point scale by *circling the appropriate number.*

PART 2 - SELECTION PRACTICES

In Part 2 you are asked to focus on issues relating to your practices for selecting employees.

A. When school leavers apply for employment they may provide a range of documents to support their application. How useful are these documents for selection purposes?

	very useful			not useful
6. Report on work experience	1	2	3	4
7. School references	1	2	3	4
8. School reports	1	2	3	4
9. Personal references	1	2	3	4
10. Certificates reporting results from external examinations	1	2	3	4
11. Certificates reporting results from school assessment	1	2	3	4
12. Certificates including both assessment marks and performance on external examinations	1	2	3	4
13. Miscellaneous awards (e.g. Swimming, Debating, First Aid)	1	2	3	4
14. Others (please specify)				
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4

B. What importance do you place on the following attributes, in selecting school leavers for employment?

		very important			not important
15.	Oral communication as indicated by interview	1	2	3	4
16.	Personal matters	1	2	3	4
17.	Standard of dress	1	2	3	4
18.	Presentation of self	1	2	3	4
19.	Organisation and presentation of supporting documents	1	2	3	4
20.	Others (please specify)				
	_____	1	2	3	4
	_____	1	2	3	4

C. In selecting school leavers for employment do you take the school they attended into consideration?

Yes ___ No ___

If "yes", please indicate how important each of the following school-related characteristics is in the selection process. If "no", go to section D.

		very important			not important
21.	Geographical location of school	1	2	3	4
22.	Proximity of school to place of employment	1	2	3	4
23.	Past experience with students from that school	1	2	3	4
24.	Personal knowledge of that school	1	2	3	4
25.	Known quality of documentation from that school	1	2	3	4
26.	Information on courses offered at that school	1	2	3	4
27.	Others (please specify)	1	2	3	4
	_____	1	2	3	4
	_____	1	2	3	4

D. How important is each of the following in providing you with information about particular schools?

	very important			not important
28. Word of mouth	1	2	3	4
29. Attendance of own family members	1	2	3	4
30. Examination results	1	2	3	4
31. Reports in local newspapers	1	2	3	4
32. Reports in NT newspapers	1	2	3	4
33. Personal contact with school	1	2	3	4
34. School publications	1	2	3	4
35. Ex-student network	1	2	3	4
36. Others (please specify)	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4

E. What importance do you place on the following groups of subjects?

	very important			not important
37. Geography	1	2	3	4
38. Commerce/Economics	1	2	3	4
39. History	1	2	3	4
40. Health/Physical Education	1	2	3	4
41. Mathematics	1	2	3	4
42. Creative and Performing Arts	1	2	3	4
42. (a) Social and Cultural Education	1	2	3	4
43. English	1	2	3	4
44. Sciences	1	2	3	4
45. Languages	1	2	3	4
46. Home Economics	1	2	3	4
47. Technical Studies	1	2	3	4
47. (a) Computer Studies	1	2	3	4
48. Career Education	1	2	3	4
49. Others (please specify)	1	2	3	4

_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4

50. **When selecting school leavers for employment, do you take the school subjects they studied into consideration?**

Yes ___ No ___

F. **School reports may contain various features. How useful are each of the following for selecting school leavers for employment?**

		very important			not important
51.	Principal's comments	1	2	3	4
52.	Record of attendance and absence	1	2	3	4
53.	Individual teachers' comments	1	2	3	4
54.	Information on participation in school activities (e.g. sport, debating)	1	2	3	4
55.	Performance in school subjects	1	2	3	4
56.	Relative position of student in each subject	1	2	3	4
57.	Relative position of student in Year	1	2	3	4
58.	Others				
	_____	1	2	3	4
	_____	1	2	3	4

59. **Do you use the documentation presented by school leavers for purposes other than selection?**

Yes ___ No ___

If 'Yes', please place a tick alongside the purpose(s) for which you use the documentation. If 'No', go to Part 3.

60. Placement within the organisation _____
61. Decisions about induction programs _____
62. Decisions about training programs _____
63. Determination of salary _____
64. Determination of level of responsibility _____
65. Others (please specify)

PART 3 - DESIRED PRACTICES

In Part 3 you are asked to focus on issues relating to future processes and their impact on selecting employees.

66. **Is it important that a school leaver provides a folio of documents when seeking employment?**

Yes ____ No ____

67. **If 'Yes', what would you wish to see presented in such a folio? If 'No', go to question 68.**

_____

_____

_____

_____

68. **Below is a description of various 'packages' of documentation which school leavers may present when seeking employment. Please consider the different packages and rank them in terms of their usefulness for your selection purposes (1 - most useful; 4 - least useful). You may find the notes under the packages of some help.**

PACKAGE A	PACKAGE B
Externally Issued Certificate	Externally Issued Certificate
School Report	School Report
School Reference	

PACKAGE C	PACKAGE D
Externally Issued Certificate	Externally Issued Certificate
School Reference	

RANK

Package A _____

Package B _____

Package C _____

Package D _____

Externally issued Certificate - Document issued by a central government authority.

School Report - Document issued by the school containing information regarding a student's academic achievement, conduct, attendance , etc.

School Reference - Document issued by the school containing information regarding attributes and participation in aspects of school life.

G. **For the purpose of selecting school leavers for employment, how important is it that the proposed Certificate of Secondary Education contain the following information?**

		very important			not important
69.	Courses studied in last completed years	1	2	3	4
70.	Courses studied in earlier years	1	2	3	4
71.	Levels of achievement in courses studied	1	2	3	4
72.	Time spent on each course	1	2	3	4
73.	Names of previous school(s) attended	1	2	3	4
74.	Number off years spent in secondary education	1	2	3	4
75	Others (please specify)				
	_____	1	2	3	4
	_____	1	2	3	4

H. There are several ways of reporting results on courses studied.

76. Please consider the examples of different reports shown below and rank them in terms of their meaningfulness for your selection purposes (1 - most meaningful; 6 - least meaningful).

Please note that for the sake of simplicity only three subjects are shown.

Subjects completed: English Maths Science	RANK ____

English: Satisfactory Maths: Unsatisfactory Science: Satisfactory	RANK ____

English: Average achievment Maths: Below average Science: High achievement	RANK ____

English: Decile 6 Maths: Decile 4 Science: Decile 8 *A Decile 6, for example means that the student performed as well as, or better than, 60% of all other students in that course*	RANK ____

English: 65% Maths: 45% Science: 75%	RANK ____

English: C Maths: D Science: B *Ranges ftom A to E,* *A well above average* *C average* *E well below average*	RANK ____

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77. **Any other comments on reporting results?**

_____

_____

_____

78. **The following are factors on which information may be provided as part of the certification package. Please place a tick alongside the five factors which you think are most useful for the purpose of selecting school leavers for employment.**

Attitude to study	____
Attendance	____
Cooperation	____
Conduct	____
Respect for others	____
Willingness to follow instructions	____
Involvement in out-of-school activities	____
Punctuality	____
Leadership	____
Honesty	____
Work experience	____
Initiative	____
Participation in school life	____

79. **Are there other important factors on which you would want to have information recorded? What are they?**

_____

_____

_____

80. What are the best methods of informing you and other employers of changes to the reporting processes?

_____

_____

_____

_____

81. How can employers assist the Department of Education in informing the public about changes to reporting processes?

_____

_____

_____

82. Any other comments?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your cooperation

APPENDIX 2

RESPONSES TO CLOSED QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

	PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS RATING ITEMS										
Item	Resp NT	Resp NSW	NT 1	NSW 1	NT 2	NSW 2	NT 3	NSW 3	NT 4	NSW 4	Mean 1-4
6	96	100	39	35	40	41	17	21	5	3	1.9
7	94	100	30	16	39	45	26	32	6	7	2.1
8	95	100	43	46	41	37	11	14	5	2	1.8
9	94	100	26	7	35	24	32	52	7	17	2.2
10	94	100	45	62	42	32	9	5	4	1	1.7
11	92	99	28	41	47	43	19	14	6	1	2.0
12	92	100	45	61	39	34	12	4	4	0	1.7
13	87	100	9	13	24	42	51	39	16	5	2.7
15	99	100	76	71	22	28	2	1	0	0	1.3
16	93	100	22	56	47	43	24	1	6	0	2.1
17	98	100	50	41	43	50	6	9	0	0	1.6
18	97	100	81	69	18	30	1	1	0	0	1.2
19	97	100	35	41	51	48	13	11	2	0	1.8

Item	Resp NT	Resp NSW	% YES NT	% YES NSW	% NO NT	% NO NSW
Part 2c	95	100	22	23	78	77

	PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS RATING ITEMS										
Item	Resp NT	% NSW	NT 1	NSW 1	NT 2	NSW 2	NT 3	NSW 3	NT 4	NSW 4	Mean 1-4
21	52	100	4	2	10	19	13	25	73	54	3.6
22	51	96	2	4	18	8	80	26	0	62	3.8
23	52	100	27	31	35	40	15	13	23	15	2.3
24	52	98	37	25	27	41	13	20	23	14	2.2
25	51	100	37	38	33	48	18	12	12	2	2.0
26	52	98	31	24	23	37	29	31	17	8	2.3

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS RATING ITEMS

Item	Resp NT	Resp NSW	NT 1	NSW 1	NT 2	NSW 2	NT 3	NSW 3	NT 4	NSW 4	Mean 1 - 4
28	85	92	20	9	30	35	30	26	21	30	2.6
29	84	87	27	11	24	11	25	31	24	46	2.5
30	85	92	31	32	34	36	22	16	14	16	2.2
31	85	92	7	1	24	23	31	36	39	40	3.0
32	85	92	9	3	24	23	28	37	39	37	3.0
33	85	92	25	25	31	33	24	20	20	22	2.4
34	83	92	6	1	21	20	34	40	39	38	3.1
35	77	92	6	4	21	20	34	43	39	33	3.1
37	92	93	5	1	24	23	44	56	26	20	2.9
38	94	96	28	35	50	52	16	11	6	2	2.0
39	90	95	3	1	19	24	47	56	30	19	3.0
40	91	94	74	9	41	35	28	42	17	15	2.5
41	93	98	71	74	23	24	3	2	3	0	1.4
42	92	94	4	5	16	20	38	50	42	25	3.2
42a	91	-	10	-	34	-	35	-	21	-	2.7
43	96	98	78	74	18	22	2	3	2	0	1.3
44	92	96	32	33	36	45	24	21	7	1	2.1
45	91	96	9	5	28	27	35	48	28	21	2.8
46	91	96	5	1	12	10	31	41	52	48	3.3
47	90	93	27	29	39	35	24	27	10	9	2.2
47a	90	-	36	-	47	-	13	-	5	-	1.9
48	82	94	21	22	33	36	28	32	18	10	2.4

Item	Resp NT	Resp NSW	Percent YES NT	Percent YES NSW	Percent NO NT	Percent NO NSW
50	93	97	86	92	14	8

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS RATING ITEMS

Item	Resp NT	Resp NSW	NT 1	NSW 1	NT 2	NSW 2	NT 3	NSW 3	NT 4	NSW 4	Mean 1 - 4
51	96	99	22	19	41	45	25	29	12	7	2.3
52	96	100	62	54	32	39	4	7	2	0	1.5
53	95	100	46	47	39	45	12	7	4	1	1.7
54	94	99	19	29	48	52	26	19	7	1	2.2
55	94	99	55	63	39	34	5	3	2	0	1.5
56	94	97	24	36	41	44	22	16	13	4	2.2
57	92	100	12	34	49	42	28	20	11	4	2.4

APPENDIX 2

Item	Resp NT	Resp NSW	Percent YES NT	Percent YES NSW	Percent NO NT	Percent NO NSW
59	94	100	21	28	79	72

Item	Indicated NT	% NT Responses	% NSW Responses
60	30	73	81
61	9	22	27
62	32	78	67
63	13	32	27
64	22	54	48

Item	%Resp NT	%Resp NSW	Percent YES NT	Percent YES NSW	Percent NO NT	Percent NO NSW
66	96	98	79	94	21	6

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS RANKING ITEMS

Item	Resp NT	Resp NSW	NT 1	NSW 1	NT 2	NSW 2	NT 3	NSW 3	NT 4	NSW 4	Mean 1-4
68A	82	98	89	88	6	10	2	2	3	0	1.2
68B	81	98	8	13	76	76	16	11	1	0	2.1
68C	81	97	1	1	17	15	80	78	2	6	2.8
68D	81	97	2	0	2	4	3	7	92	89	3.9

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS RATING ITEMS

Item	Resp NT	Resp NSW	NT 1	NSW 1	NT 2	NSW 2	NT 3	NSW 3	NT 4	NSW 4	Mean 1 - 4
69	95	99	71	85	22	14	3	1	3	0	1.4
70	94	98	13	15	38	42	39	38	9	5	2.4
71	94	99	71	85	24	14	3	0	2	0	1.4
72	93	99	23	15	41	51	28	29	8	5	2.2
73	93	99	5	2	17	17	40	48	39	33	3.1
74	93	99	34	38	37	40	22	19	7	3	2.0

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS RANKING ITEMS

Item 76	NT 1	NSW 1	NT 2	NSW 2	NT 3	NSW 3	NT 4	NSW 4	NT 5	NSW 5	NT 6	NSW 6
A	2	0	1	0	1	1	7	4	11	2	78	92
B	1	1	6	2	13	5	26	14	52	73	2	4
C	11	8	23	13	30	26	30	50	3	3	1	1
D	55	43	20	26	14	14	7	12	3	4	2	9
E	18	35	26	32	14	14	19	6	19	9	5	3
F	15	12	26	31	28	40	13	13	9	3	9	1

RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

The first eight tables are derived from questionnaire items 14, 20, 27, 36, 49, 58 and 75. All of which were *'others'* i.e. respondents were provided with the opportunity to refer to something other than that which they were presented with as items to rate or rank. The remainder of the tables are derived from the responses to specific open-ended questions.

The method of processing data was to identify the components of responses and locate them within the most appropriate categories. The authors have refrained from 'fitting square pegs into round holes' i.e. locating comments into categories which are only marginally or not appropriate, and have drawn up new categories where necessary to retain the individuality of the response.

Not all data has been included in these tables. For reasons of economy of space this was necessary but where the authors decided that particular comments were completely irrelevant, these comments were not reported. However full data is obtainable from the Northern Territory Curriculum and Assessment Branch.

NSW figures have not been shown in these tables due to different methods of data analysis. This would result in two sets of data derived differently being compared as if derived using the same methods.

Questionnaire open-ended item 14. Twenty-eight employers responded to this item. Their responses were categorised into 32 separate comments. Not all comments have been included.

OTHER DOCUMENTS	Total Comments	Percentage of Comments
Involvement in school/community activities	7	22
Work experience references	3	9
Relevant Certificates	3	9
Home environment - family background	2	6
S.D.E course/driving experience	2	6
Attitude & personality assessment	2	6
Trade skills	2	6
Evidence of individual's English expression ability	2	6
Presenting information in a coherent manner (referring to their documents for interview)	1	3
Part-time work references/reports	1	3
Aptitude tests	1	3

Questionnaire open-ended item 20. Forty-three employers responded to this item. Their responses were categorised into 63 separate comments. Not all comments have been included.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES	Total Comments	Percentage of Comments
Some knowledge of the job applied for	11	17
Attitude	8	13
Self-confidence	8	13
Personality	6	10
Team skills	3	5
Handwriting	3	5
Must be punctual	3	5
Residency status	2	3
Ability to learn	2	3

Courtesy	1	2
Non-smokers	1	2
Sense of humour	1	2
Tolerance	1	2
Interests	1	2
Extra curricular activities	1	2
Commonsense	1	2
Comprehension	1	2
Previous part time employment	1	2
Written autobiography	1	2
Values	1	2
Ambition & goals	1	2
Physical attributes (ie. build)	1	2
Parent's physical attributes (ie. build)	1	2
Home/Family situation ie. family support, living at home etc	1	2
Attitude to employers	1	2
Enthusiasm towards career	1	2

Questionnaire open-ended item 27. Fourteen employers responded to this item. Their responses were categorised into 18 separate comments. Not all comments are included in this Table.

CHARACTERISTICS	Total Comments	Percentage of Comments
Reputation of school	7	39
Standard of personal discipline	4	22
Private or public	2	11
Quality of courses	1	6
Scholastic standards achieved at school	1	6
Standard of teachers	1	6

Questionnaire open-ended item 36. Sixteen employers responded to this item. Their responses were categorised into 27 separate comments. Not all comments are included in this Table.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION Comments	Total Comments	Percentage of
General reputation of school	6	35
More concerned with the individual rather than the school	5	29
Standard of teachers	2	12
Course selection available to students	1	6
Special school activities	1	6
Attitude of principal	1	6
Attitude of teachers	1	6

Questionnaire open-ended item 49. Thirteen employers responded to this item. Their responses were categorised into 15 separate comments. Not all comments are included in this Table.

OTHER IMPORTANT SUBJECTS	Total Comments	Percentage of Comments
Land management	2	13
Political studies	2	13
Communications	2	13
Subjects dependent on type of job	2	13
Computers - basic	2	13
The 3 Rs	1	7
Typing	1	7
Legal Studies	1	7
Biology and Physiology	1	7
Values and ethics	1	7

APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire open-ended item 58. Ten employers responded to this item. Their responses were categorised into 16 separate comments. Not all comments are included in this Table.

FEATURES OF REPORTS	Total Comments	Percentage of Comments
Attitude to studies	5	31
Potential	3	19
Participation in school/community activities	3	19
Type of course interested in	1	6
Information must be accurate & honest	1	6
Aptitude	1	6
Role of student in school activities	1	6
Percent marks in English & Mathematics	1	6

Questionnaire open-ended item 75. Seven employers responded to this item. Their responses were categorised into 9 separate comments. Not all comments have been included in this Table.

FEATURES OF CERTIFICATES	Total	Percentage of
State average of course	1	11
Relations with teachers and peers	1	11
Extra-curricular activities record	1	11
Written self-evaluation	1	11
Rank of student to peers	1	11
Whether student has passed/failed	1	11
Attitude	1	11
Participation	1	11
Attended work orientation courses	1	11

APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire open-ended item 67. Employers were asked, *'If "Yes", what would you wish to see presented in such a folio of documents when seeking employment?"*. One hundred and forty-three employers responded to this item. Their responses were categorised into 357 separate comments. Not all comments have been included in this Table.

DOCUMENTS MENTIONED	Total Comments	Percentage of Comments
School reports	55	15
Resumes	35	10
School references	29	8
Relevant certificates	26	7
Work experience reports	24	7
Examination results	24	7
Personal references	22	6
School results	21	6
Attendance records	13	4
Teacher comments	10	3
As stated in Part 2 - A of the questionnaire	10	3
Qualifications	9	3
Personal achievements	8	2
Extra-curricular activities	7	2
Attitude to work	7	2
Written application for position	6	2
Samples of written work	6	2
Career aims	5	1
Interests	4	1
Future plans	3	1
Examples of drawing work	3	1
Home situation	2	1
Part-time employers' references	2	1
Awards	2	1
School assessments	2	1
Subjects studied	2	1
Report on interpersonal skills	2	1
Medical record	2	1
Report on conduct	2	1
Personal performance reports	2	1
Principal's comments	1	0
Birth certificate	1	0
Vocational guidance reports	1	0

Reports on competencies	1	0
Details of strengths and weaknesses	1	0
Sporting achievements	1	0
Amount of time at secondary level	1	0

Questionnaire open-ended item 77. Employers were asked, *'Any other comments on reporting results?'*. Forty-four employers responded to this item. Their responses were categorised into 66 separate comments. Not all comments have been included in this Table.

OTHER COMMENTS ON REPORTING	Total Comments	Percentage of Comments
Ranking information is needed	17	26
Teacher's comments are needed	10	15
Information on sample size is needed	6	9
Both a score and a qualitative guide is needed	6	9
Percentage marks	6	9
Pass/Fail indication is needed	3	5
Commonality across Australia is needed	3	5
Averages should be shown	2	3
Results have little bearing unless subjects relate to the situation	2	3
The simpler, the better	1	2
Indication of level of effort is needed	1	2
Uniformity over time is crucial	1	2
The more objective, the better	1	2
Indication of level of difficulty is needed	1	2
Raw scores should be shown	1	2
Course outlines are needed	1	2
Student's overall ability to express him/herself	1	2
Ability to learn	1	2
Counsellor's report should be included	1	2

Questionnaire open-ended item 79. Employers were asked, *'Are there other important factors on which you would want to have information recorded? What are they?'*. Thirty-six employers responded to this item. Their responses were categorised into 46 separate comments. Not all comments have been included in this Table.

OTHER FACTORS TO BE REPORTED	Total Comments	Percentage of Comments
All factors given in questionnaire item 78	6	13
Initiative	4	9
Special skills/talents	4	9
Desire to achieve	3	7
Perseverance	2	4
Enthusiasm for work	2	4
Attendance	2	4
The 3 Rs	2	4
Attitude to study	1	2
Co-operation	1	2
Conduct	1	2
Leadership	1	2
Honesty	1	2
Career assessment advice	1	2
Ability to learn	1	2
Summary of strengths/weaknesses	1	2
Energy/industry	1	2
Sporting achievements	1	2
Hobbies/Interests	1	2
Self-discipline (i.e. how the student handles things he/she doesn't really enjoy doing)	1	2
Student's career hopes	1	2
Personality attributes	1	2
Commonsense	1	2
Student's ability to handle pressure	1	2
Factors which don't rely on personal opinions are most useful	1	2
Maturity	1	2
Stability (i.e. fluctuations in behaviour)	1	2
Other factors are best determined during interviews	1	2
Living/not living with parents	1	2

Questionnaire open-ended item 80. Employers were asked,*'What are the best methods of informing you and other employers of changes to the reporting processes?'* . One hundred and thirty-seven employers responded to this item. Their responses were categorised into 184 separate comments. Not all comments have been included in this Table.

INFORMING EMPLOYERS	Total Comments	Percentage of Comments
Mail to personnel/employers	58	32
Through the media	34	18
On Certificates/Reports	21	11
Through professional/industry organisations	15	8
Regular bulletins	12	7
Employer leaflets	10	5
Departmental seminars/briefing days	5	3
Distribution through the CES	4	2
Through schools/career advisors	4	2
Liaison person within the Department	4	2
Samples to personnel groups	3	2
Public Service notices	3	2
Not needed	3	2
Through research activities	3	2
Uniformity over time reduces need to communicate changes	2	1
Detail the changes in 'lay-person's' terms	1	1
Mail which also requires some sort of reply	2	1

Questionnaire open-ended item 81. Employers were asked, *'How can employers assist the Department of Education in informing the public about changes to reporting processes?'*. Eighty-four employers responded to this item. Their responses were categorised into 141 separate comments. Not all comments have been included in this Table.

EMPLOYERS ASSISTING THE DEPARTMENT	Total Comments	Percentage of Comments
Not seen as role of employers	16	19
Via questionnaires/surveys	12	14
Being part of a feedback system	9	11
Disseminating information to managers	8	10
Revising recruitment notices	7	8
Disseminating information to employer/industry groups	5	6
Through the media	5	6
Employer advertising	3	4
By word of mouth	3	4
Through the schools	2	2
By exposure	2	2
Attaching explanations to school reports	2	2
Being supportive of needed changes	1	1
Holding seminars	1	1
Information to parents	1	1
By being fully informed themselves	1	1
By mail	1	1
Recruitment policy manuals	1	1
Sending information home with students	1	1
Employers donate funds to assist in advertising of any changes	1	1
Through the interview process generally	1	1

APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire open-ended item 82. *'Any further comments?'*. Fifty-seven employers responded to this item. Their responses were categorised into 86 separate comments. Not all comments have been included in this Table.

OTHER COMMENTS	Total Comments	Percentage of Comments
An improvement is needed in the quality of students (this is mainly referring to Maths & English)	11	13
Favourable comments to the questionnaire	10	12
Has little bearing on our situation	8	9
More interaction between school and employers is needed	7	8
Other skills need to be taught	5	6
Uniformity is needed in school reports	4	5
Only experienced personnel are employed	4	5
An improvement is needed in the quality of teachers	4	5
In an interview, the ability to communicate, show initiative and being well presented are regarded favourably	4	5
Matriculation is seen as minimum job qualification	4	5
More career guidance is necessary	3	3
More objectivity is needed in reporting	2	2
A complete picture of the student is needed	2	2
Interview/presentation skills need to be taught	2	2
There should be a scheme operating where a bank of employers are used to give students work experience	2	2
Improvement is needed in the current School Certificate	2	2
Basic competencies should be reported	1	1
Emphasis needs to be taken off tertiary education	1	1
Employment should be the aim of education	1	1
Reality of information is needed	1	1
Majority of school leavers employed are apprenticed to a trade	1	1
Consideration should be given to students- what they want to learn	1	1
Commonsense is important	1	1
Employers must expect to train their employees if they want specific skills	1	1
School life may not have prepared students for boring, repetitive work often found by base grade staff	1	1

Small companies would employ more school leavers, if govt. ministers would stop govt. employees from working second jobs in conjunction with their govt. employment	1	1
Schools place an emphasis on hi-tech & academic aspects, implying that physical work & non-office/building conditions are unthinkable or not worthwhile (as does the questionnaire)	1	1
Information of grades should be provided	1	1

APPENDIX 3

EMPLOYERS' WORKSHOP
SCHOOL LEAVERS : WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT
BEAUFORT HOTEL DARWIN 8 MAY 1989
PROGRAM

0815	Registration	
0830	Opening remarks:	Workshop Chairman Mr Merv Elliott, Executive Director, Master Builders' Association of NT
	Welcoming addresses:	The Hon. Tom Harris M.L.A., Minister for Education Mr Raphael Crowe, Executive Director, NT Confederation of Industry and Commerce
0900	Workshop overview:	Mr C Fowler, Superintendent, Evaluation, Research & Accreditation Section
0915	Research overview:	Mr Z S Huang, Principal Research Officer, ERA Section
0930	Survey findings :	Mr R Dunbar, Research Officer, FEPPI
1000	Morning tea	
1030	**Group Discussion Session #1. Issues** school subjects and courses; documentation/student portfolio; expectations of employers; interview; personal attributes; assessment/reporting/certification; selection criteria	
1130	Current initiatives :	Board of Studies (BoS): Dr C H Payne, Chairman, BoS: Business Education Council (BEC): Mr G Cross, Chairman, BEC
1200	Lunch	
1300	**Group discussion session #2. Implications** Board of Studies/Department of Education; employers; schools; school leavers; parents.	
1345	Plenary session	
1500	Closing remarks:	Workshop Chairman
1515	Afternoon Tea	

APPENDIX 4

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EMPLOYERS' WORKSHOP
FOCUS QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

GROUP 1. SCHOOL SUBJECTS AND COURSES

1. How well do employers understand what is taught in each different subject area? e.g. Economics or Commerce.

2. Why do employers attach such importance to Mathematics and English in applicant selection?

3. Do employers consider subjects such as the Arts and Home Economics unimportant, or are they not important in the selection process?

4. For job selection what weighting do employers attach to:
   (a) subjects studied?
   (b) performance in them?

5. Is the current range of subjects offered by Education Institutions adequate to enhance present and future job/employment prospects?

GROUP 2. DOCUMENTATION

PART A. DOCUMENTATION/STUDENT PORTFOLIO

1. School reports are the documents most requested by employers, yet they are in most cases written for students and parents and often contain "diagnostic" comments. Is this a problem?

2. How many documents should a student portfolio contain?

3. From the survey (page 26) which documents are essential? Are they currently available?

4. From the survey (page 71) which documents are not important?

5. How can we give this message to students?

6. How current should documents be?

7. How many employers ask to see the Student Portfolio folder? Do they find it useful?

8. How can we promote the Student Portfolio?

9. To what extent should the contents of the Student Portfolio be presented in a standard format? What do employers think? How much assistance should the student receive in compiling their own personal Student Portfolios?

PART B. ASSESSMENT, REPORTING AND CERTIFICATION

1. Do employers understand the Junior and Senior Secondary Studies Certificates?

2. How can a wider understanding of the JSSC and SSSC be gained?

3. To what extent do employers understand the current certification? How can this understanding be improved?

4. At which levels should external examinations exist?

5. Why do employers appear to attach so much importance to external exams?

6. What do employers understand by the moderation of school-based assessment?

7. How can a wider understanding of the moderation of school-based assessment be gained?

GROUP 3. EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYERS

1. Should employers expect students to present a Student Portfolio when applying for a job?

2. Is the present form of the Student Portfolio suitable for use by employers?

3. What kinds of information should employers provide to schools to assist students with employment/career choices?

4. If employers intend using their own selection tests should they seek advice from experts in test design?

5. Should employers adopt a school?

6. What are the expectations placed on employers by the wider community?

GROUP 4. INTERVIEW AND PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

1. What do employers expect of an interview? What should applicants/employers take to the interview?

2. What should the interviewee expect of the employer?

3. What expectations do employers have of schools to prepare students for job interviews?

4. Whose responsibility is it to develop students' personal attributes?

5. How do you evaluate personal attributes?

6. How much importance should be attached to referees' statements?

7. What is meant by "presentation of self"? How important is it as a selection criteria?

8. Do employers like applicants to present with an image something like their own?

9. How should school leavers project an image that will impress the average employer?

10. Would employers be impressed by an applicant presenting with a type-written well set-out application?

11. Is it easy for employers to see through an artificial image projected by an applicant?

12. How relevant is the proverb: "You can't tell a book by its cover", to selecting between applicants for a position?

13. What personal manners is it desirable for applicants to possess?

GROUP 5. SELECTION CRITERIA

1. What are the essential elements which make up a good selection criteria?

2. Is it a good idea to have clearly stated selection criteria?

3. To what extent are specific selection criteria used by employers?

4. Should all jobs have selection criteria attached to them?

5. What are the various techniques used by employers in choosing between applicants?

6. In addition to the interview, is a practical/performance test also appropriate?

7. Which candidate gets the job?

APPENDIX 5

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EMPLOYERS' WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

John ANDREW	Store Manager	Coles New World
Heather BLAKELEY	Principal Edn Officer	Dept of Education
Leanne BLORE	Personnel Officer	Territory Insurance Office
Michael BRADLEY	President	NT Teachers' Federation
Brian BROCK	Member	Rotary Club of Darwin South
Ann BUTLER	Co-ord,Austrialian Traineeship Schemes	Institute of TAFE, NT University
Sherrill CHRISTENSEN	President	Career Educators' Association
Bob COX	Principal Edn Officer	Dept of Education
Geoff CROSS	Director	Territory Surveying & Consulting Services
Raphael CROWE	Executive Director	NT Confed Industry & Commerce
Barry DAVIS	Vocn Service Director	Rotary Club of Port Darwin
Robert DUNBAR	Research Officer	FEPPI
Merv ELLIOTT	Executive Director	Master Builders' Association
Ross FINOCCHIARO	Manager	Darwin Bakery
Cliff FOWLER	Superintendent	Dept of Education
Tim FREED	Training Development Executive	Construction IndTraining Committee
Sylvia GEORGE	Zone Liaison Officer	Trade Development Zone Auth
Gai GLASSCOCK	Admin Officer-Person	Commonwealth Bank
Roger GLEESON	Human Resources Mgr	Dept Lands, Housing & Conservn
Tom HARRIS	Minister for Education	
David HAWKES	Secretary	Dept Labour & Admin Services
Ian HOLLAND	Inspector, Recruit Train	NT Police
Zheng Sen HUANG	Prin Research Officer	Dept of Education
Ray HUTT	Executive Director	NT Tourism Ind Training Comm
Mary LEFEVRE	Superintendent	Dept. of Education
Kerryn LETTS	Co-ordinator	Youth Access Centre, DEET
Susan LUONG-VAN	Education Officer	Dept of Education
Ian MACLEOD	Personnel Supt	Ranger Uranium Mine
Giuseppi NICOLOSI	Staff Development Mgr	Dept of Transport & Works
Nick NIKOLEAFF	Store Manager	K-Mart
Harry PAYNE	Director, Curriculum & Assessment Branch	Dept of Education
Kath PHELAN	Deputy Secretary, TAFE	Dept of Education
Prath PRATHAPAN	Vocation Service Dir	Rotary Club of Darwin Nightcliff
Ric RALPH	Assistant Principal	Casuarina Secondary College
Chris RENSHAW	Senior Education Officer	RAAF
Chris SHARPE	Education Officer	Dept of Education
Geoff SPRING	Secretary	Dept of Education
Julian SWINSTEAD	Managing Director	Northern Territory News
Richard WATKINS	Principal Edn Officer	Dept of Education
John WHITE	Secretary	Aust Small Business Assn (NT)